

# Contents

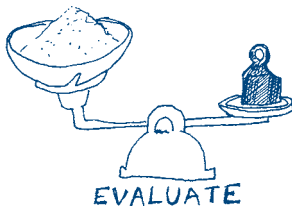
<b>Contents</b>	v	<b>3 Planning pays</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	viii	What kind of planner are you?	16
<b>Introduction</b>	ix	Planning your planning!	19
<b>1 The purpose of essays</b>	<b>1</b>	Dividing up the word count	20
The purpose of essays	1	Dividing up the page count	21
How does doing an essay display your knowledge and understanding?	2	Dividing up the main body	22
What does your tutor want?	3	<b>4 Dealing with the question</b>	<b>23</b>
Look at your learning outcomes	4	Analysing the question	23
How students' and tutors' views of what is needed differ	5	Breaking down the question	24
Assessment criteria	7	Assessment instruction (or process) words	25
<b>2 What you need to know before you do ANYTHING!!!</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5 Analysing essay structure</b>	<b>28</b>
Groundwork	9	Analysing the structure	28
The stages of essay writing	11	Making a diamond essay	29
Overview of the whole process	12	A diamond essay – looking at the main body	30
Planning the whole process	14	A diamond essay – paragraph planning	31
Time and task line	15		

Essay diamond	32	Writing the conclusion: aspects to include	49
Use W E E D to help you construct a paragraph	34	What NOT to do in the conclusion	50
Going deeper – the paragraph plan	35	And finally ... a top tip about conclusions	51
Example of a good paragraph	36	Has this student produced a good conclusion?	52
<b>6 Introductions and conclusions</b>	<b>38</b>	Introductions and conclusions checklist	55
Understanding introductions and conclusions	38	<b>7 Types of essay</b>	<b>56</b>
What is the purpose of the introduction?	39	What TYPE of essay are you doing?	56
Writing your introduction – aspects to include	40	Planning an argument essay	57
Aspect 1: Information your reader needs to know	41	Planning a ‘to what extent’ essay	58
Aspect 2: What you are going to do and how this will be done	42	Planning an informative essay	59
Aspect 3: Say what you are going to argue	43	Planning a compare and contrast essay	60
And finally ... a top tip about introductions	44	Planning a reflective essay	62
Has this student produced a good introduction?	45	Planning a cause and effect essay	66
		<b>8 Exam essays</b>	<b>69</b>
		Are exam essays different?	69
		Before the exam	69

In the exam	70	Signal words explained	92
After the exam	74	More signal words explained	93
<b>9 Researching</b>	<b>76</b>	Making it flow – use signposts	94
Getting started is hard to do ...	76	Problem solving	95
First thoughts: ways to get them down on paper	77	Always proofread your work	97
What is the advantage of using mind-mapping software?	78	<b>11 References, bibliographies and appendices</b>	<b>98</b>
Converting your mind map to a linear outline	80	Referencing: why are you being asked to reference?	98
Converting mind map and outline to a document for editing	82	How to reference	99
Information audit	83	What is the difference between references and bibliography?	101
Gathering information	84	Appendices	102
How reliable is your evidence?	85	<b>12 Using feedback</b>	<b>104</b>
Check your sources now – it's as simple as AABBC	86	Using feedback to make an action plan	105
Sources checklist	87	The most common errors	106
<b>10 Drafting and redrafting</b>	<b>88</b>	Essay-writing checklist	108
Academic style	88	<b>References</b>	<b>109</b>
Using 'signal' words	91	<b>Index</b>	<b>111</b>

## The purpose of essays

**Essays are set so you can display your knowledge and understanding.** They may have different formats depending on your subject. If you have been given a format to follow make sure you follow it as closely as you can.



## How does doing an essay display your knowledge and understanding?

Writing the assignment involves you in different activities which improve your understanding of the topic.

### **To write an effective essay you must:**

- ▶ have a clear idea of what you are being asked to do
- ▶ gather information
- ▶ present your argument
- ▶ use the language and style most appropriate to the discipline you are studying and
- ▶ do all of this in a limited time and limited word count.

### **In doing this you will be using different academic skills:**

- ▶ decision making to focus your work
- ▶ research skills
- ▶ planning skills to produce a logical argument
- ▶ writing skills used in a way suitable to your discipline
- ▶ time management and ability to work to deadlines.

## What does your tutor want?

Your tutor wants to see that you have:

- ▶ addressed any *learning or knowledge outcomes* either for your course or this particular piece of work ( p. 23 )
- ▶ followed course or field *professional standards and conventions*, for example a business report format or addressing ethical issues for social work
- ▶ taken a viewpoint and *developed an argument* to support this
- ▶ *evaluated the evidence* you have found – ask if it is relevant, up to date and from a reliable source ( p. 87 )
- ▶ *shown a clear link between theory and practice*, usually by providing examples such as linking educational theory to actual classroom situations, maybe from your own practice
- ▶ followed academic criteria, usually *by researching and using a range of reliable sources and referencing these correctly*
- ▶ shown *transferable skills* such as *time management* and *presentation* of your work, for instance using a computer.

## LOOK at your learning outcomes

The assessment criteria are designed to test the learning outcomes, but what does the term 'learning outcomes' mean?

The learning outcomes are what you are supposed to know as a result of doing your course. It is up to you to **show** that you have learnt these and **can demonstrate** this by some method of assessment. Helpfully, these are usually outlined for you in your course handbook or given with your assignment.

**Example question:** *How well does provision meet mental health need?*

**Learning outcomes** that need to be demonstrated for this essay:

- 1 Ability to create an appropriate psychological profile for the chosen service user which demonstrates an understanding of evidence-informed practice in relation to the issues being presented.
- 2 Knowledge and application of ONE social work theory and/or method to the process of assessment and intervention related to the service user.

Most students do not use the learning outcomes effectively. If you learn to interpret these you can target exactly what your tutor wants in a piece of work. They are often written in difficult language so put them in your own words.

## How students' and tutors' views of what is needed differ

It would be useful to know if students and tutors have different ideas about what is important in an essay. If you know what your tutors are looking for you can match their expectations to maximise marks.

Cover up the last two columns and put in order how important *you* think the different criteria are. Compare this with the results from Norton's (1990) research. If there are any surprises for you here, make a note of it now so you can check that your next essay matches with the tutors' view below.

Criteria	Your ranking	Tutors' ranking	Students' ranking
Answer the question		1	1
Understanding		2	4
Argument		3	7
Relevant information		4	3
Structure/organisation		5	6
Evaluation/own view		=6	8
Presentation/style		=6	9
Wide reading		8	5
English/spelling		9	10
Content/knowledge		Not ranked	2

Norton's (1990) students' vs. tutors' ranking of essay writing criteria

## How do students' and tutors' criteria for a good essay vary?

According to Norton (1990) both students and tutors put *answering the question* as the most important criterion but students thought content and knowledge was the next most important thing. Tutors, however, thought *understanding* and *argument* were much more important than, say, wide reading. This shows a key difference between the student and tutor perspective: your tutor is less interested in you displaying knowledge; he or she knows that already. Your tutor **wants you to show your understanding by developing an argument using relevant information in a well-structured piece of work**. S/he is also interested in you having a view and being able to evaluate evidence.

Take a look at the criteria Norton produced and compare this with your own view, taking care to notice any differences. These will be the *key ways* you can focus on to improve your essay writing.

**So this tells us you need to:** Worry less about the content and more about **showing your understanding** and **arguing your own viewpoint**. Target this and you may need to do less reading overall.

## Assessment criteria

You can see now that there are differences between students' and tutors' views of what needs to be in a good essay. This fact is important, since the biggest difference when studying at university is that **you have to work out how to follow the assessment criteria for yourself**. However long ago it was for you, teachers at school did a lot of this for pupils and assignments were designed so they exactly matched the assessment criteria. As long as the advice and instructions were followed you were almost guaranteed to get it right. You may also have been allowed to submit a first draft, about which the teacher made helpful suggestions.

University is different. You may have just an essay question and assessment criteria, with no opportunity to show your work to your tutor before the deadline (which you will find is usually an absolute deadline).

For example: *Evaluate the proposition that a global monoculture will destroy diversity and difference*. Just where do you start? What exactly is your tutor looking for? How will it be assessed? This is where your assessment criteria are vital. They will provide clues to follow and learning to interpret these will allow you to match your tutors' expectations.

Have a look at your list of assessment criteria. The wording may vary but usually these follow the same pattern so it is worth looking at now.

## Looking at *your* assessment criteria

Look at your **assessment criteria** now. Tick the ones in the table you are being asked for. This gets easier to do as you become used to academic language. It is important you get in the habit of checking which criteria you need to follow for *each* essay you start.

<b>Tick the assessment criteria needed for your essay</b> (then read the small print for each tick)	✓ or X
<b>Addressing the question:</b> does the essay clearly answer the question set and focus on the title throughout the essay?	
<b>Essay structure:</b> is this clear, logical and well defined with an introduction, middle and conclusion? Does the conclusion draw together points made in the middle and 'mirror' the introduction?	
<b>Showing understanding:</b> is this consistently demonstrated in a logical, coherent and lucid way with evidence of wider reading?	
<b>Developing an argument:</b> is this presented by a well-reasoned and supported argument based on the available evidence?	
<b>Critical thinking/critical evaluation:</b> is material presented in a critical manner, which critiques concepts or methods used and shows an appreciation of alternative perspectives and any current controversies?	
<b>Use of language and academic style:</b> does it provide a well-presented, readable and generally clear essay which the reader wants to read, and does it show correct spelling and grammar use?	

Adapted from Elander et al. (2006)

# Index

- AABBCC, 86, 87
  - academic skills, 2, 4, 10
- academic style, 8, 88–90
- action plan – from feedback, 105
- analysing the question, 23, 24, 71
- analysing the structure, 28
- answering the question, 5, 6, 8
- appendices, 102
- argument essay, 56–7
- argument – showing your, 6
- assessment criteria – following, 7, 8, 10
- assessment instruction words, 25–7
  
- bibliography, 101
- brainstorming, 77
  
- breaking down the question, 24
  
- cause and effect essay, 66–7
- checklists
  - essay 108
  - introduction 55
  - conclusion 55
- citation – in text reference, 99
- compare and contrast essay, 60–1
- conclusion, 49–55
- critical thinking, 8
  
- deadline, 9
- diamond essay, 29–33
- drafting and redrafting, 88–98
  
- errors – most common, 106
- essay
  - checklist, 108
  - diamond, 29–33
  - problem solving, 95
  - types of, 56
- evidence
  - AABBCC, 86, 87
  - reliability, 85
  - sources (checklist), 86
- exam essays, 69–73
- extent – ‘to what extent ...’ essay, 58
  
- feedback, 104–6
- first thoughts, 77
- flow – simple tricks to do this, 94
- format, see structure
  
- groundwork, 9
  
- information audit, 83
- information gathering, 84

- informative essay, 56
  - planning a, 59
- Inspiration software, 77–82
- instruction words, see process words
- introduction, 38–47
  - checklist, 55
- learning outcomes, 3, 4, 10
- main body
  - dividing up, 22, 29,30
  - of diamond essay, 29, 30
- marking criteria, 8, see assessment criteria
- mind mapping
  - Inspiration software, 78, 80, 82
- paragraphs, 31–6
- planning
  - your planning, 19
  - what kind of planner are you? 16
  - the whole process, 14
- practice – linking to theory, 84
- problem solving, 95
- process of essay writing, 12–13
- process words, 23, 25–7
- proofreading, 97
- question
  - analysing the, 23
  - breakdown, 24
- redrafting, 88–98
- referencing, 98–101
- reflective essays, 62–4
- reflective model, 62–4
  - reliability – of evidence and sources, 85–7
- research
  - first thoughts, 77
  - gathering information, 84
  - getting started, 76
  - information audit, 83
- signal words, 91–3
- signposting, 91, 94
- SMART objectives, 63, 65
- sources – checklist for reliability, 87
- stages – of essay writing, 11–13
- structure – analysing the, 9, 28
- student view of what makes a good essay, 7
- task timeline, 14, 15
- theory – link to practice, 84
- time management, see task timeline, 14–15
  - in exams, 70
- tutors
  - view of what makes a good essay, 7
  - what do they want? 3
- types – of essay, 56
  - argument, 57
  - cause and effect, 66
  - compare and contrast, 60
  - informative essay, 59

reflective, 62  
to what extent, 58

Venn diagram, 60

viewpoint – of what in a good  
essay  
student, 5–6  
tutor, 7

voice – your voice in the  
essay, 35

WEED – to plan paragraphs,  
34

word count dividing up, 9,  
20–2

word types

in essay, 91–3  
in the title, 23–4  
process, 23, 25–7  
signal, 91–3