

Checklist for Essay Management

Efficient Organisation

- Make a note of all assignments' due dates for the semester in your diary or on a prominent calendar.
- Allocate time for researching and writing in proportion to each essay's length and the percentage of marks it carries. Allocate times in your diary/calendar to research and write for each assignment.
- Set yourself a date for completing the first draft of each essay, about a week before it is due to be submitted.
- Arrange an LSC appointment to discuss the plan or the draft, whichever you think will be more valuable. If you are new to essay-writing, come at the planning stage.
- Analyse the essay task to focus your research, and make a preliminary plan.
- Collect together the books and journals you will need.
- Use prime time (when you are most alert) for making good notes, working out your argument, planning the essay structure, writing and editing.
- Use down time (when you are not at your most alert) for clerical tasks, such as finding sources and compiling your reference list.
- Be flexible: if you are waiting for a library book, use the time for some other assignment-related task, or work on another assignment.
- Ask your tutor if you need help (tutors' office hours are usually on their office doors).

Essay-Writing Checklist

In order to prepare the first draft you need:

- A clear understanding of the question
- A preliminary plan to guide your reading
- Fully-referenced notes on the relevant parts of all the essential readings and recommended texts
- A tentative argument statement (thesis), showing how you will argue your case
- A writing plan which includes the main points that support your argument.

Structure of an Essay

Most academic essays contain the following:

- An **introduction** that contains any necessary context, clarification, definitions or key areas to be covered and a statement of the main argument.
- Body paragraphs.** Each of these begins with a topic sentence that advances the argument, followed by supporting explanation, discussion and evidence.
- A **conclusion** that shows clearly that the task has been fulfilled or the question answered.

Editing

You will need to draft and redraft your work, so allow plenty of time for this process. When you check your work, begin by reading it for overall sense (the overview), make sure that the meaning is clear, and find out how it should be presented.

Overview

- The arguments in the paragraphs should support your thesis statement: you may need to modify your original thesis if your essay has taken a slightly different direction.
- The arrangement of the points is logical, easily followed and progressively addresses the task.
- Each body paragraph develops a main point.
- All material is relevant to the essay's focus.
- The essay is the required length. (If it is too long, do not omit any of your main points, but make your writing more concise; if it is too short, check that you have answered all parts of the question and fully explained your ideas.)
- All sources of information and ideas are correctly referenced.

Clarity

- Your ideas are clearly expressed in formal English and can be easily understood.
- Sentences are correctly constructed and punctuated – no sentence fragments, comma splices or missing apostrophes.
- There are no spelling, punctuation, capitalisation or typing errors.

Format

- References are in the citation style required by the department or programme (check on the Library website under "Citations and Referencing").
- The presentation meets the requirements of the department or programme (cover sheet, margins, font, font size, line-spacing and paragraph breaks).

Hand It In

- Submit your essay on time in the form required by the lecturer (hard copy, on-line or both).