



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE

Assessment Guidelines

September 2011

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ESSAY WRITING

This guide breaks the task of essay writing into four stages:

FOUR STAGES OF ESSAY WRITING

1. Deciphering the Question: Establish your topic
 - Dissect the question
 - Tools for thinking: Brainstorm, Mind Maps, WWWWWH Questions
2. Information Gathering and Research
 - Publication Information
 - Reading
 - Note Taking
3. Assembling Ideas: *Compositional phase*
 - The Plan
 - Writing a First Draft: *Introduction-Body-Conclusion*
 - Using Quotations and References: In-text citations, Reference List-Bibliography
 - Plagiarism
 - Analytical Writing
 - Sample Structures
 - Distinguishing Qualities: Top, Middle, Pass, Fail
4. Editing and Submitting: *Secretarial phase*
 - Revising and Proofreading
 - Final Presentation Checklist

STAGE 1: DECIPHERING THE QUESTION: ESTABLISH YOUR TOPIC

Every student approaches an essay writing task in his/her own way. Over time you will develop your own systems for reading, taking notes and writing. However, if you have not yet developed your own system and are unsure about where and how to start, there are frameworks which you can use to help you start. The first stage of essay writing involves dissecting the question or essay title.

DISSECT THE QUESTION

The assignment title will contain key words that can help focus the content and structure of your essay. Therefore, it is worthwhile spending time deciphering what the question is asking you to do.

Keywords

- What are the keywords?
- Are there words or phrases within the title which need defining or explaining?

Action Words

What action words are used in the title? For example, you may be asked to

- Analyse
- Discuss
- Compare and contrast
- Evaluate

These action verbs require you to take a different approach, so before you start be sure you understand what exactly is expected for the action word in your title.

VERB	What you need to consider...
Discuss <i>Debate the key points</i>	What are the key concepts? What are the main arguments and debates? What are the points for and against? What examples could you use to illustrate these points? What are the implications of these arguments and debates? Does the argument come down in favour of one side or another? Why?
Analyse <i>Identify components and relationships in order to explain and interpret</i>	What are the essential elements of the theory/idea/argument? How is the theory/idea/argument organised or structured? How can you break down the theory/idea/argument? How are ideas linked? What are the underlying assumptions? How are these relevant? What is the implication/outcome?
Compare <i>Examine to observe similarities and differences</i>	What are the facts and how are they similar? How do theories/ideas/arguments resemble each other? On which points are theories/ideas/arguments the same? Where/how do ideas correspond and relate? Where/how do ideas diverge? What are the key points of difference?
Contrast <i>Show how the facts or ideas are different</i>	What are the facts and how do they differ? How do theories/ideas/arguments differ from each other? On which points are theories/ideas/arguments different? In what way to theories/ideas/arguments differ and what are the implications of this?
Evaluate <i>Make judgements and appraisals</i>	How can you assess or appraise the quality, relevance, objectivity and accuracy of information? What are the key points? What is the purpose of the theory/idea/argument? Does the theory/idea/argument achieve this purpose? How? How not? Where does the theory/idea/argument have merit? Where does the theory/idea/argument fail or falter? What works? What is problematic? How does theory/idea/argument compare to others? Which aspects of the theory/idea/argument are most significant/controversial?

Sometimes, rather than assign a set essay title, you may be asked to find a topic on your own. Most people find this difficult. Give yourself plenty of time to think about what you would like to do. Trying to answer questions you have about a particular subject may lead you to a good idea.

- What subject(s) are you interested in?
- What interests you most about a particular subject?
- Is there anything you wonder about, or are puzzled about, with regard to that subject?
- Is there any aspect of the course/topic that you have particular experience or knowledge of which could help you shape an answer?

Be sure your topic is specific enough so that you can write about it in detail in the number of words that you are allowed. Having a particular focus will help you write a more interesting paper.

If you do not understand what you are being asked to do, check with your tutor.

TIP 1: DO the BUG



BOX Action words *Analyse, discuss*

Underline Key words

Glance back to check

From: Price, G., & Maier, P., (2007) *Effective Study Skills Unlock your Potential*, Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, p. 284

EXAMPLE 1: Dissecting a title

The Irish higher education system is fair and equitable. Discuss

The Irish higher education system is fair and equitable. Discuss

Now check to ensure you have not missed anything. E.g., is requires a different answer than if the question said should be.

This simple exercise immediately helps identify what you need to do:

KEY/ACTION WORD	Clarification	What you need to do...
Irish	Do you mean all Ireland or Republic only?	State which part of Ireland you will discuss in your essay and why
Higher Education System	What is the higher education system?	Define what is meant by the higher education system in Ireland
	Which institutions are included/excluded?	Outline (briefly) which institutions are included in this umbrella term
Fair and equitable	How are these points defined? What is understood by these concepts?	Outline how you are going to deal with these concepts in your essay
	Are there recognised measures of fair and equitable within higher education?	Is there a working definition that you will use? Why did you choose this definition?
Discuss	This requires you to consider points on both sides of the argument and to weigh up the points	Decide what points you want to discuss
		Use points to illustrate where the system is fair and equitable and points to indicate where it is not fair
		Use evidence and examples to back up your argument – e.g., statistics, reports, international reviews, expert comment

TOOLS FOR THINKING

Now that you have dissected your essay title and have a clearer understanding of what is required, try and think about the ideas and points you might like to include in your essay. There are a number of useful techniques for organising your thoughts including brainstorming, mind-maps and the WWWWWH questions.

Brainstorm

Brainstorming is a useful way to let ideas you didn't know you had come to the surface. Sit down with a pencil and paper, or at your computer, and write whatever comes into your head about your topic, no matter how confused or disorganised your thoughts may appear.

Keep writing for a short but specific amount of time, say 3-5 minutes. Don't stop to change what you've written or to correct spelling or other errors. After a few minutes, read through what you have written. You will probably discard most of it, but some of what you have written may give you an idea you can develop.

Mind Maps

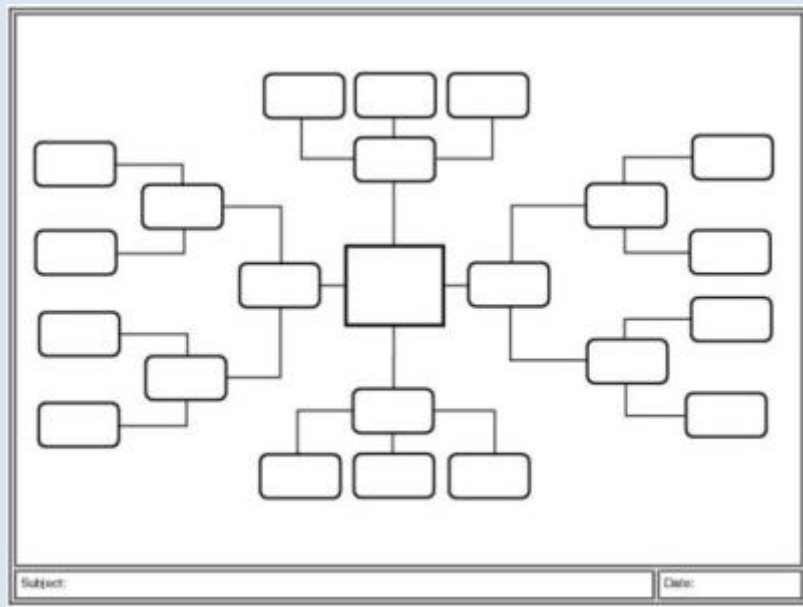
A mind map is a diagram of your ideas. It is a form of concept mapping and is a useful technique to visualise and organise your thoughts. There are some quite elaborate guidelines on mind mapping but it is possible for those with no knowledge of this technique to use rudimentary mind-maps to tease out concepts and ideas.

Mind maps are usually created around a single word/piece of text/question, placed in the centre of the page, to which associated ideas, concepts and words are added. To start draw a bubble/square with a central key word or idea, or even your essay title. From this then draw lines or arrows from the main central bubble to related ideas. The mind-map can become more complex as you add further ideas and layers

Initially, you might just wish to get all your ideas and concepts on paper. Once you have your diagram, you can then start to look at how the ideas relate and how they might be grouped and then prioritised. From this diagram, you can then select which ideas are most important and which offer you the most scope to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding.

Even a basic attempt to draw a mind-map can help you organise your thoughts and map the key concepts and themes that you wish to address in your assignment.

Tip 2: Try a Mindmap



Taken from:

http://www.mymindmap.net/images/Mind_Map_Template_Multirnd_small.jpg

WWWWWH Questions

Who?	Question or Problem	When?
What?		Why?
Where?		How?

Journalists are trained to ask these basic questions when filing a story: Who is involved? What happened (i.e. what is the story)? When did it take place? Where did it take place? Why did it happen? and How did it happen?

These questions are useful in information gathering and in reporting on factual based events. This approach can be modified to help you think about the arguments and ideas you might wish to include in your essay. Asking questions of your essay title is a useful way to think through what you might include/exclude and why? Not all questions might be relevant but even attempting to ask some of the questions of your title will help stimulate ideas.

Who?	<p><i>Who is the focus of your essay? It may not be a person, but a person's ideas</i></p> <p><i>If your essay is about a character/figure, who are you talking about?</i></p> <p><i>What do you know of their life/ideas? Why is that figure of importance?</i></p> <p><i>What is his/her legacy? How are that person's ideas relevant today?</i></p>
What?	<p><i>What theory/model/idea are you discussing? What do you mean by....?</i></p> <p><i>What are the key concepts? What are the key definitions?</i></p> <p><i>What problem does the theory attempt to define or resolve?</i></p> <p><i>What is the main issue? What are the key themes?</i></p> <p><i>What are the limits of your subject?</i></p> <p><i>What is the story that you wish to tell?</i></p> <p><i>What is your position? What is your argument?</i></p> <p><i>What aspects of your argument/story are most compelling and why?</i></p> <p><i>What is the evidence for your argument?</i></p> <p><i>What facts/examples could you use to illustrate your argument/story?</i></p> <p><i>What are the alternative perspectives?</i></p> <p><i>What are the root causes of the issue/problem being addressed?</i></p> <p><i>What impacts on the way you view the theory/model/idea?</i></p> <p><i>What assumptions are you making?</i></p>
Where?	<p><i>Where does your essay deal with? Are you talking about a specific local/regional/national/international issue? If so, how does this influence the context? Would comparative analysis add weight to your argument?</i></p> <p><i>Where might you look to for examples of good practice?</i></p>
When?	<p><i>When was the theory/model/idea presented?</i></p> <p><i>Are you discussing a contemporary/historical issue?</i></p> <p><i>Does the period of time matter when discussing the theory?</i></p> <p><i>How might the period of time influence the evolution of the idea/ theory?</i></p>
Why?	<p><i>Why does the subject matter?</i></p> <p><i>Why does the theory/model/idea have merit today?</i></p> <p><i>Why do people take differing views on the topic? What are these views?</i></p>
How?	<p><i>How is the theory/model/idea significant, and why?</i></p> <p><i>How are theory A and theory B alike or different? Why?</i></p> <p><i>How does the theory/model/idea relate to practical applications?</i></p> <p><i>How does the theory/model/idea relate to your life experience?</i></p> <p><i>How has the theory/model/idea been used? What has been the result?</i></p> <p><i>How does point A relate to point B?</i></p> <p><i>How do you justify your position? How can you provide evidence?</i></p> <p><i>How might examples and illustrations, or an outline of cause and effect persuade the reader that your argument has merit?</i></p> <p><i>How can you apply your learning?</i></p> <p><i>How has your thinking/perspective changed over the duration of your course?</i></p>

By asking some of these questions, you may generate ideas that you wish to include, or identify areas that can be excluded. You may also begin to understand how your thinking is shaped and realise that you are making assumptions that might be valid, or in some instances might need to be reconsidered. Posing such questions helps you seek clarification for your ideas and consider alternatives.

STAGE 2: INFORMATION GATHERING AND RESEARCH

Before you start writing, you need to identify what materials you should read to give an informed overview of your topic. You need to consider:

- What research do you need to undertake to clarify key concepts and theories?
- What sources would help give you an understanding of the context?
- Could you get information online? If so, how reliable is this information?
- What sort of factual evidence do you require?
- Are there any relevant/current newspaper/journal articles which provide up-to-the minute commentary/opinion on your topic?
- Who are the expert writers/commentators in this area?
- Do you need to look up international opinion/comparisons?
- Would statistics help support your argument? If so, can you interpret the statistics correctly?
- Can you access up to date sources?

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

When you are writing for academic purposes, it is necessary to record the publishing details of the works you consult. Citing and referencing the work of experts in your discipline is a key academic skill. As you progress through your academic career, your tutors will expect you to demonstrate that you are familiar with the key writers in your area. Therefore, noting the publication details of all your reading is a key task. So, even before you start reading it is a good idea to take a note of the publishing details of all materials you consult, including:

- Author
- Title – article/book/journal
- Year of publication
- Publisher
- Edition
- Page numbers

When you source information on a website, note the author of the information or the source of the information (e.g. an organisation), the title of the web page, the date you accessed the information and the website address or URL (e.g., www.ucd.ie/adulted).

Develop a system for recording and storing the details of your reading. There is no one perfect system, but find a system that works for you. There are software packages available (e.g., Endnote www.endnote.com) which manage publication lists and can be used to store research notes and quotations.

READING

When you start to research your topic you will probably realise very quickly that there is a vast range of material available, so you need to be strategic about what you can read in the timeframe available to you. Given how information multiplies, particularly on the internet, you need to decide how to approach your reading so that you maximise what you learn.

Reading tips

- **Read purposefully:** Before you start, ask yourself: What do you hope to learn from what you are reading? What questions do you want your reading to answer? What key concepts/ideas do you need to identify?
- **Preview:** Look at the table of contents, chapter titles, sections and subsections. Consider what concepts are addressed and what areas are highlighted. This helps organise your thoughts, marks out what is important and builds a structure for what you are about to read. Turn the chapter titles into questions in your mind so that answering that question can be your objective when reading. For example, if your chapter is titled *Managing Stress*, you might set a question such as *What is stress and how can it be managed?* Now rather than reading aimlessly, you are directing your reading to address these questions. This is a more focused approach.
- **Read for comprehension, then read critically:** firstly, consider what points are being made, and then look at how the points are being made and how the argument is presented. What points are included? Are there obvious points overlooked? Could the argument be presented differently? Is the author clear and concise?
- **Summarise key points as you go:** Take notes/highlight key concepts/draw diagrams – whatever system works for you.
- **Review:** When finished, jot down the key things you have learned, e.g., list the top three things you will take away from that reading.

NOTE TAKING

There is no unique or single way to take notes in class or when reading. Each person devises a system that works for him or her. Trying to learn a 'better' system may just lead to more frustration and stress so identify a system that works for you and stick with it. Following are some suggestions for ways to organise your note taking.

Information Grid

An information grid helps summarise ideas and log the key ideas for and against particular arguments. The matrix can be used in a number of ways as now suggested:

CONCEPT/THEORY/IDEA	CONTEXT/EXAMPLES/DEBATES
Summary of the theory/concept/idea	What is the context of the concept/theory/idea – where does it fit or where/why is it discussed?
Dimensions of the theory/concept/idea	Examples of the theory/concept/idea in action
Related terminology and language	Debates: what are the main arguments and tensions around this theory/concept/idea

OR

POINTS FOR	POINTS AGAINST
<i>Who argues for?</i>	Who argues against?
What point is being made?	What point is being made?
Reasons	Reasons
Examples	Examples

OR

THEORY	PRACTICE
Elements of theory	How implemented...
Key points	How applied...
Key ideas	Outcome
Contested points	What works?
	What doesn't?

Taking notes in this way helps to clarify the various sides of an argument or to distinguish between matters in theory and practice.

STAGE 3: ASSEMBLING IDEAS: *COMPOSITIONAL PHASE*

THE PLAN

By developing a plan, or essay outline, you can determine how you are going to structure and present your ideas. Preparing an outline is also a useful way of ensuring you cover all the key points and address them in a logical order. Most academic assignments require you to address a topic in a set amount of words. If you have a draft outline before you write, you can allocate more words to the points which are of most merit.

An essay is composed of three parts:

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Orientates the reader• Identifies the purpose/focus• Signposts the content:• <i>Say what you are going to say</i>
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contains a number of paragraphs, each containing a key idea• <i>Say it</i>
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarises argument• Presents your final comment• <i>Say what you have said</i>

The outline will be used to create your essay's paragraphs. At this point, check that your ideas are all relevant and related to the topic or task. If some of your ideas are going off on a tangent, now is the time to eliminate them.

Sample outline: Order of ideas

Introductory paragraphs

- Setting the scene - context - background information
- Statement of intent (or thesis statement) – the angle /argument the essay will take
- Definitions-boundaries

Idea/Theme 1

- Main point/idea
- Info to support this idea
- Statements/examples to verify this idea

Idea/Theme 2

- Main point
- Sub point
- Quotation or example

Idea/Theme 3

- Main point
- Points of controversy/debate
- Quotation or example

Idea/Theme 4

- Alternative argument
- Quotation or example

Final paragraphs

- Link ideas
- Concluding comment

WRITING A FIRST DRAFT: INTRODUCTION-BODY-CONCLUSION

Now that you have a plan or outline in place, you are well placed to start writing with a degree of authority.

Introduction

The introduction should captivate the reader's attention and give an idea of the essay's focus. The purpose of the introduction is to:

- Engage the reader's curiosity so that he or she will want to read about your topic
- Outline what you are going to say and let the reader know what the topic is
- Establish any boundaries or limitations to your work
- Inform the reader about your point of view or state your argument
- Pose a question which you intend to answer
- Give your reasons for focusing on certain aspects of the topic

You may start your essay with an attention-getter such as a bit of fascinating information, captivating dialogue or an interesting fact. Start with a few sentences that explain your topic in basic terms and lead into your thesis statement. Move from the general to the specific. Each sentence of your opening paragraph should become a bit more specific, until you reach the thesis statement. Your thesis statement should, in one sentence, explain what you intend to write about and the point of view the essay will take. The thesis statement should be clear, concise and focused so that it can be supported: it declares what you believe and what you intend to demonstrate in your assignment. It provides you with a central point around which you can build an argument and structure your work. For the reader, the thesis statement is a statement of intent and suggests to the reader you have a position that you are going to explain and support. By using a thesis statement at the outset to identify your central theme and argument, you are suggesting to the reader that you have an opinion, about which you are informed, and that you can support that opinion. It suggests your thoughts are organised and focused, immediately giving the reader a positive impression of what is to follow.

Example: Essay Title: The Irish higher education system is fair and equitable. Discuss

Thesis statement: Although there are aspects of the Irish higher education system which can be deemed fair and equitable, a number of indicators suggest the system is not entirely fair and equitable for all participants.

This statement suggests you will argue why the higher education system is not universally fair and equitable to all participants. It suggests you will:

Identify aspects which are fair and equitable

Identify aspects which are not fair or equitable and provide examples of indicators which demonstrate this

Give examples of those participants for whom the system is neither fair or equitable

Hint: It is often easier to write your introduction last when you have a good idea what shape your essay has taken. Then you can spell out exactly what you have covered in the essay.

Body

The body of your assignment consists of a number of paragraphs in which you develop your ideas in detail. Each of the main ideas that you listed in your outline will become a paragraph in your essay. Start by writing down one of your main ideas, in sentence form. Build on your paragraph by including each of the supporting ideas from your outline.

Limit each paragraph to one main idea.

- Every sentence in a paragraph should explain or illustrate the main point/idea of that paragraph.
- Each sentence should have a purpose of its own
- Each sentence should lead the reader naturally onto the next sentence
- Establish your argument, or elaborate on your opinion, by using specific examples and quotations
- Use transition words to ensure a smooth flow of ideas from paragraph to paragraph
- Relate back to the essay title frequently
- Use a key sentence to sum up the main point of the paragraph

Conclusion

The conclusion serves to bring together everything that has gone before. The conclusion should not come as a shock to the reader by including new ideas or opinions which have not been discussed previously. You might wish to suggest that topics emerged which warrant further exploration or propose further ideas for debate, but this is not the time to introduce bold new ideas. The conclusion should sum up the main points or provide a final opinion with a number of convincing sentences. It should review the main points, while being careful not to restate them exactly, or briefly recap your opinion about the topic. The conclusion should mirror what was outlined in the introduction and relate clearly to the objectives set out at the beginning.

USING QUOTATIONS AND REFERENCES

When you are writing, you will need to demonstrate that you have read around the topic and that you are familiar with the work of the key writers and thinkers in your field. When you use someone else's ideas in your own work, you need to acknowledge where you got those ideas and provide information so that the person reading your essay can then locate the article/book/website. Referring to the work of others highlights the scope of your reading and demonstrates your ability to connect ideas. Good referencing and citation is integral to the study of any subject and is part of good academic practice. Therefore, drawing on other people's work is an essential academic skill. You should compile a reference list as you work.

Many referencing systems exist, all with different formats and protocols. The one described here is the **Harvard Referencing System**, one of the most common, internationally-used standards for acknowledging sources of information and ideas. If you do an online search, there are many websites with detailed examples of this referencing system. Some of the examples differ slightly, so the main thing is be consistent throughout your work.

You need to acknowledge (reference) other peoples work twice:

1. **Within** the body of your essay (**in-text citations**) and
2. At the **end** of your work (**a reference list** or bibliography)

Within the text you need to include the author, the year, and the page number from where you took your information. In the reference list at the back of your essay, you need to list the full publication details for the text/journal where you found your information. Some examples now follow:

In-text Citations

You can take another person's ideas and quote them directly - **direct quotations** - or you can summarise someone's ideas using your own language - **indirect quotations**.

Using quotations within the text allows you to:

- Illustrate or support a point
- Convey a flavour of a piece of literature
- Express an idea concisely
- Include policy statements or legal points

Quotations should blend in with what you are saying and add impact to your essay. If the quotation does not relate directly to what you are discussing, or just hangs without being

integrated or explained, your essay will appear disjointed. Therefore, quotations should fit with your argument rather than prove you have read a particular book. Likewise, if you include too many quotations in your essay, you run the risk of overpowering your own ideas and insights, so that your essay reads merely as a series of quotations strung together.

So, ensure that when you include quotations they are part of a coherent narrative and that they add to rather than detract from your work.

Direct quotations, which use other people's words without amendments or edits, are good for definitions and for highlighting particularly articulate or well-made points. When a sentence is taken directly from another source, you should use quotation marks. Long quotations of more than two lines should be indented and italicised and do not require quotations.

Example 1: Direct Quotations

In-text citations

Checkoway states that a democratic society requires 'citizens who have ethical standards, social responsibilities, and civic competencies' (2001, p. 129).

Ross argues that 'citizenship is an important aspect of our identities: it is that aspect that involves our political engagement and participation in a community' (2007, p. 293).

A university is defined as:

An institution, whether public or private, which aims to: advance knowledge through inquiry and research; educate students for entry into careers with a high knowledge base and requiring intellectually demanding competences and skills; strengthen cultural values; foster responsible citizenship; and provide service to the community (Skilbeck, 2001, p. 18).

Reference list

CHECKOWAY, B. (2001) Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University. *The Journal of Higher Education*. 72(2), pp. 125-147.

ROSS, A. (2007) Multiple Identities and Education for Active Citizenship. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 55(3), pp. 286-303.

SKILBECK, M. (2001) *The University Challenged: A Review of International Trends and Issues with Particular Reference to Ireland*. Dublin, Higher Education Authority.

Indirect quotations involve restating or paraphrasing someone else's ideas. Rather than copy extracts directly, you summarise the essence of the material in your own words. Indirect quotations are useful when you wish to simplify complex materials or distil a long paragraph or argument into a key point. Using indirect quotations ensures your language and voice flows in an even style. With indirect quotations you do not need to use quotation marks.

Example 2: Indirect Quotations

In-text citations

Examining the social returns of learning is a growing area of interest as exemplified by research into the *Wider Benefits of Learning* (Feinstein et al., 2008; Schuller et al., 2004).

Citizenship has horizontal dimensions, how people relate to each other, and vertical dimensions, how they relate to local and national government (Watters, 2009, p. 35).

Over recent years there has been a significant shift in the citizenship debate from notions of *formal citizenship*, the status position and legal basis of citizenship, to *realised citizenship* which involves active participation (Wagner, 2008, p. 95)

Reference list

FEINSTEIN, L., BUDGE, D., VORHAUS, J. & DUCKWORTH, K. (2008) *The social and personal benefits of learning: A summary of key research findings*. London, Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning (WBL).

SCHULLER, T., PRESTON, J., HAMMOND, C., BRASSETT-GRUNDY, A. & BRYNNER, J. (2004) *The Benefits of Learning: The impact of education on health, family life and social capital*. London, RoutledgeFalmer.

WATTERS, K. (2009) Learning from the future. *Adults Learning*. 20(10), pp. 35-37

WAGNER, A. (2008) Citizenship through education. A comment on social exclusion in Europe: some conceptual issues. *International Journal of Social Welfare*. 17(1), pp. 93-97.

Reference List – Bibliography

The terms bibliography and reference list are often used interchangeably but have different meanings. A **bibliography** is a list of *all* the resources you consulted to get information and formulate ideas for your essay whereas a **reference list** includes only the works you referred to or cited in the body of your essay. Check with your tutor or lecturer which is required. Both serve the purpose of informing the reader of the scope and range of your reading.

Either a reference list, or a bibliography, is included at the end of your essay. You will find it easier to prepare your final list if you keep track of each book, or article you use, as you are reading and taking notes. Note down the full title, author, place of publication, publisher, and date of publication for each source.

When assembling a final reference list/bibliography organise your sources (texts, articles, and so on) in *alphabetical order by the authors' last names*.

Book

- Author's surname and initials
- Year of publication in brackets
- Title underlined or in italics
- Edition if book has more than one edition
- Volume number if book has more than one volume
- Place of publication
- Publisher

Examples

BILTON, T., BONNETT, K., JONES, P., LAWSON, T., SKINNER, D., STANWORTH, M. & WEBSTER., A. (2002) *Introductory Sociology*. 4th Ed. Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan.

ELLIOTT, A. & LEMERT, C. (2006) *The new individualism: the emotional costs of globalisation*. London, Routledge.

HELD, D. (2006) *Models of Democracy*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.

ILLICH, I. (1970) *Deschooling Society*. London, Marion Bowers Publishers.

WENGRAF, T. (2001) *Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London, Sage Publications.

Edited Book

- Editor's surname and initials, followed by (Eds.)
- Year of publication in brackets
- Title underlined or in italics
- Edition if book has more than one edition
- Volume number if book has more than one volume
- Place of publication
- Publisher

Examples

ARTHUR, J. & BOHLIN, K. E. (Eds.) (2005) *Citizenship and Higher Education: the role of universities in communities and society*. London, RoutledgeFalmer.

BJARNASON, S. & COLDSTREAM, P. (Eds.) (2003) *The Idea of Engagement: Universities in Society*. London, Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Chapter in an Edited Book

- Author's surname and initials
- Year of publication in brackets
- Title of chapter
- Editors, followed by (Eds.)
- Book title
- Place of publication
- Publisher
- Numbers of the first and last pages of the chapter

Examples

BARNETT, R. (2007) Recovering the Civic University. IN MAC LABHRAINN, I. & MCILRATH, L. (Eds.) *Higher Education and Civic Engagement: International Perspectives*. Aldershot, Ashgate. pp. 25-35.

BERGAN, S. (2009) Higher education as a "public good and public responsibility": what does it mean? IN BERGAN, S., GUARGA, R., EGRON POLAK, E., DIAS SOBRINHO, J., TANDON, R. & TILAK, J. B. G. (Eds.) *Public Responsibility for Higher Education*. Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. pp. 43-61.

- GIBBONS, M. (2003) Engagement as a Core Value in a Mode 2 Society. IN BJARNASON, S. & COLDSTREAM, P. (Eds.) *The Idea of Engagement: Universities in Society*. London, Association of Commonwealth Universities. pp. 48-70.
- GLENN, C. A. (2005) Universities of character? IN ARTHUR, J. & BOHLIN, K. E. (Eds.) *CITIZENSHIP AND HIGHER EDUCATION: the role of universities in communities and society*. London, RoutledgeFalmer. pp. 33-50.
- HADDAD, G. (2000) University and Society: Responsibilities, Contracts, Partnerships. IN NEAVE, G. (Ed.) *Issues in Higher Education*. Oxford, International Association of Universities. pp. 29-35.
- KIRP, D. L. (2005) This Little Student Went To Market. IN HERSH, R. H. & MERROW, J. (Eds.) *Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk*. New York, palgrave macmillan. pp. 113-129.

Journal Article

- Author's surname(s) and initials
- Year of publication in brackets
- Title of article
- Title of Journal in full and italicised
- Volume number, issue number
- Numbers of the first and last pages of the article

Examples

- BARNETT, R. (2009) Knowing and becoming in the higher education curriculum. *Studies in Higher Education*. 34(4), pp. 429-440.
- DESJARDINS, R. (2008) Researching the Links between Education and Well-being. *European Journal of Education*. 43(1), pp. 23-35.
- FIELD, J. (2008) Get happy. *Adults Learning*. 20(2), pp. 8-11.
- JACOBS, F. G. (2007) Citizenship of the European Union - A Legal Analysis. *European Law Journal*. 13(5), pp. 591-610.
- NASH, K. (2008) Global citizenship as show business; the cultural politics of Make Poverty History. *Media, Culture and Society*. 30, pp. 167-181.
- SCHUDSON, M. (2006) The Varieties of Civic Experience. *Citizenship Studies*. 10(5), pp. 591-606.
- TOEWS, M. L. & YAZEDJIAN, A. (2007) The three-ring circus of academia: How to become the ringmaster. *Innovative Higher Education*. 32(2), pp. 113-122.

Websites

- Author's surname and initials or name of website if no author is available
- Year in brackets
- Title of website – in italics or underlined.
- [Online –in square brackets].
- Available from - URL
- [Accessed: followed by date in square brackets]

Examples

OECD (2008) *Reviews of Higher Education Institutions in Regional Development 2008-10*. [Online] Available from- www.oecd.org/edu/imhe/regionaldevelopment. [Accessed on January 27th 2009].

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE (2008) *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. [Online] Available from <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml>. [Accessed on January 10th 2011].

VON PRONDZYNSKI, F. (2009) *A University Blog: Diary of life and strategy inside and outside the university*. [Online] Available from - <http://universitydiary.wordpress.com/>. [Accessed on January 12th 2011].

PLAGIARISM

Referencing other people's work correctly is essential to avoid a charge of plagiarism.

Plagiarism is using other people's ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty, where ideas are presented falsely, either implicitly or explicitly, as being the original thought of the author. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence, and is defined by the act not the intention.

Plagiarism includes:

- Presenting work authored by a third party, including other students, friends, family, or work purchased through internet services;
- Presenting work copied extensively with only minor textual changes from the internet, books, journals or any other source;
- Improper paraphrasing, where a passage or idea is summarised without due acknowledgement of the original source;
- Failing to include citation of all original sources;
- Representing collaborative work as one's own.

ANALYTICAL WRITING

To demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of a topic, your essay needs to include a level of analysis. Some common tutor feedback on student assignments is that writing is not analytical or is not critical. To ensure your writing has an analytical dimension, you need to go beyond merely stating facts or explaining an idea, to examine why the fact or idea is important, and to identify any implications. Providing evidence and examples, and showing you are familiar with counter arguments and alternative perspectives also demonstrates that you have a comprehensive understanding of your topic.

Descriptive Writing	Analytical Writing
States what happens	States why something is important
Explains a theory	Gives reasons, evidence and examples
States opinions	Identifies tensions/limitations/constraints
Lists information	Outlines contributions and impacts
	Makes links and connection
	Determines relationships between ideas
	Addresses the SO WHAT question – implications, outcomes

Analytical writing which builds an argument and persuades is likely to flow coherently and logically. Transition words can help you build a case and add momentum to your writing style.

Transition Words: Examples:

For additional ideas	Cause and effect	Counter examples
Another...	Consequently...	However...
In addition to...	Thus...	Even though...
Additionally ...	As a result of...	Alternatively...
Besides...	Therefore...	Nevertheless...
Related to...	For that reason...	Otherwise
Furthermore...	Hence...	
Also...		

SAMPLE STRUCTURES

Many study guides and websites provide templates for how to write an essay. While these may assist you to think about organising your ideas, the danger is that essay writing by template becomes formulaic and prescriptive. The following sample structures are not intended to provide you with a formula for writing your assignment, but aim to illustrate that you can approach your assignment from a number of angles and construct your writing in different ways. There is no one right way but your aim should be to develop your argument in a coherent and consistent way.

Pros/cons structure: With this approach you make an argument, first by looking at the evidence and arguments in favour, then considering evidence and arguments against.

Introduction	Introduce your topic Orientate the reader Identify purpose and scope What is your angle/focus?
Context	Context Definitions Parameters A structural overview of the essay – the map
Affirmation	Evidence and arguments in favour
Negation	Evidence and arguments against
Conclusion	Summary of the argument Final statement of your position (which should correspond with what has been written in the previous paragraphs) Association of the thesis and argument with larger, connected issues

Thematic Analysis: With this approach you develop your argument by identifying what you consider to be the most important themes/ideas. Then you address each of these themes in turn.

Introduction	Introduce your topic Orientate the reader Identify purpose and scope What is your angle/focus?
Context	Context Definitions/ Parameters A structural overview of the essay – the map
Theme/Idea	The main debates/issues around this point Evidence and arguments on both sides
Theme/Idea	The main debates/issues around this point Evidence and arguments on both sides
Theme/Idea	The main debates/issues around this point Evidence and arguments on both sides
Conclusion	Summary of the arguments Final statement of your position (which should correspond with what has been written in the previous paragraphs) Association of the thesis and argument with larger, connected issues

DISTINGUISHING QUALITIES

Certain qualities distinguish essays which receive high grades from those which are awarded lower marks.

TOP

Essays in the top range are likely to:

- Answer the question comprehensively
- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the topic and familiarity with the surrounding context
- Provide definitions and explanations which assist the reader in understanding
- Present comprehensive examples to support ideas/theories/generalisations
- Acknowledge the complexity of the topic
- Expand upon points to include in-depth analysis
- Ensure that all points have evident links to each other and to the task set
- Be accurate in all details with no factual inaccuracies
- Show special initiative or distinctive insight
- Include evidence of original thinking rather than mere replication of class notes and discussions
- Have a clear confident focus
- Build a coherent, objective and rational argument
- Demonstrate authority and expertise
- Exhibit subtle and sophisticated reasoning
- Demonstrate broad reading and a knowledge of the works of the experts in the field
- Use quotations correctly and to enhance the argument
- Be supported by a comprehensive, relevant and contemporary bibliography or reference list
- Have a logical and coherent structure with good use of paragraphs, signpost sentences and transition words
- Be written clearly and fluently, with articulate and appropriate use of language and an expansive vocabulary
- Be easy to read and immediately comprehensible to the reader
- Be consistent both in argument and in style and language
- Adhere to whatever presentation and style guidelines are required by the school or department

MIDDLE

Essays in the mid-range are likely to:

- Demonstrate a sound and competent understanding of the main issues
- Provide a level of analysis and supporting examples and evidence
- Deal effectively with the task set but may omit to place this in the wider context
- Answer the question satisfactorily but may lack sustained focus or get side-tracked
- Be competent in the exploration and analysis of course ideas and discussions but may be limited in terms of depth of analysis and findings
- State ideas rather than develop them
- Be lacking in original ideas, insights or reflections which would distinguish the work as exceptional
- Show evidence of reading beyond class notes
- Use quotations and references correctly
- Include a range of reading in a bibliography or reference list
- Be factually correct
- Argue in an orderly and consistent way
- Progress logically from one point to the next
- Be well written and present few comprehension difficulties for the reader
- Make good use of paragraphs
- Include clear sentences with few spelling or grammatical errors
- Be written clearly enough to convey argument but may not be extremely fluent or articulate, or may lack an air of authority or confidence
- Adhere to presentation guidelines

PASS

Essays which receive a pass grade are likely to:

- Demonstrate sufficient knowledge to frame a basic answer to the question
- Show a basic understanding and awareness of the relevant concepts and practice
- Provide a general outline of an appropriate argument, but the argument may be poorly constructed, contain flaws or deviate from the task set
- Communicate a limited understanding while missing some points of information or not addressing the question directly
- Attempt to develop a structured response, but one which may be poorly organised or not entirely coherent
- Include indiscriminate writing around the subject, or superfluous and irrelevant material
- Lack the clarity and focus necessary for a higher grade

- Show little originality with the work lacking in quality analysis
- Be unreflective with little evidence of interpretation of facts
- Paraphrase class notes and discussions without adding any new dimension
- Make only limited reference to external reading
- Have a limited bibliography or reference list which omits key/essential readings
- Include some errors in referencing or be inconsistent in reference format
- Be reasonably well written but not use extensive or sophisticated vocabulary
- Be largely comprehensible but may include verbose or complicated sentences
- Distinguish poorly between paragraphs and have some errors in punctuation
- Use a mixture of language styles and tone so that the work is a little disjointed and not entirely persuasive or confident
- Exceed or fall short of the required word count

FAIL

Essays which fail are likely to:

- Fail to address the question
- Show no understanding of the subject matter or sense of what the material means
- Be unrelated to the task set
- Have no clear or appropriate argument
- Be poorly organised and structured
- Include little evidence or analysis, or be full of contradictions
- Contain inaccurate information
- Include obvious padding or filler or irrelevant material
- Communicate ideas poorly so that the reader has to make a significant effort to illicit the meaning and intent
- Exhibit emotional and or irrational outbursts
- Make limited or little use of external resources, or alternatively use excessive quotations without any level of analysis or real evidence that the material is understood
- Neglect to include a bibliography or reference list, or have a very limited and poorly constructed list
- Have numerous and varied errors in writing
- Have poor sentence structure and limited use of paragraphs
- Use inappropriate language or colloquialisms and slang
- Lack punctuation
- Exceed or fall short of the allocated word count to such a degree that the assignment does not comply with the course requirements
- Exhibit evidence of lack of thought or care, e.g., obvious lack of editing, no spell check, poor presentation, illegible font
- Show indications that the work may have been plagiarised

STAGE 4: EDIT AND SUBMIT: *SECRETARIAL PHASE*

Most students are under pressure to complete assignments within a limited timeframe. Therefore, they can neglect the editing phase, or leave very little time to re-read and review their work. Taking time to edit your work can pay dividends as, not only do you ensure your structure is logical and your argument coherent, you can eliminate errors in spelling and punctuation and amend your language so that it is concise and clear.

REVISING AND PROOF-READING

When marking assignments, your tutor or lecturer will consider the following:

- Relevance of content to the task set
- Evidence/demonstration of understanding
- Structure and organisation of writing
- Evidence of background reading
- Relevance of background reading
- References - is the assignment adequately and correctly referenced?
- Writing style - is it appropriate to the assignment?
- Spelling and grammar
- Presentation

Before you submit an assignment you might wish to self-assess your piece of work against these criteria. This gives you an opportunity to think about your work and whether you have answered the question correctly. It can also help you decide whether you are happy with the piece of work you are about to submit.

Read through the draft you have written. Ideally, this should be done after a little time has elapsed. This will enable you to review your writing with a critical eye. It also helps to have someone else read through your work. You may think your argument is obvious but someone reading the essay may have a different interpretation that you had not anticipated. The reader should understand your work at the first reading so try to say what you wish to say in clear, straightforward language. If the reader has to reread your work, rather than think it is complex because of its brilliance, he/she is likely to think the work is confused and unstructured or unpersuasive.

Ask yourself the following questions to determine if your essay is well organised and effective.

- Does the introduction set out clearly the theme and plan for the essay?
- Is the focus of the essay obvious?

- Is the argument clear and logical?
- Does it reach a conclusion?
- Does the conclusion relate to the content and body of the essay?
- Is your argument supported by references?
- Have you correctly acknowledged ideas, material taken from books and articles?
- Do the quotations add to the argument, or do they merely prove that a particular book or article has been read?
- Is the argument confident and persuasive?
- Does each paragraph contain a central idea?
- Do the paragraphs relate to each other in a logical way?
- Are the arguments and ideas presented rational?
- Are all the points relevant? Is there unnecessary padding?
- Is the essay broken into paragraphs?
- Could the essay be understood by a reader with no prior knowledge of the topic?
- Is the essay immediately comprehensible or are a number of readings required to trace the line of argument?
- Is the language plain and simple?
- Are your spellings correct?
- Are there any verbose or overly complex sentences? How could these be amended?
- Is there consistency in both argument and use of language?
- Have technical terms/concepts been fully explained?
- Have you explained any acronyms that you might have used? E.g. if talking about UCD, the first time it is mentioned you should write University College Dublin (UCD), and after that UCD can be used.

To determine if your argument is clear and logical, ensure that you have summarised your train of thought into shortened key points, which are relevant, logical and sequential.

To guarantee that anyone can follow the tread of your argument, ensure that you have:

- Fully explained each key point you have raised.
- Illustrated key points with relevant examples.
- Justified these points with relevant references.

To judge if you have reached a satisfactory conclusion, check that the essay begins by addressing the title, further elaborates on this in each paragraph and concludes with a statement that is relevant to the title.

To ensure smooth flowing writing, use *direct quotations* sparingly. If you fill your essay with direct quotations it might look as if you are merely extracting large chunks of material from other sources and joining these extracts together with your own comments. Also, be consistent in the style of writing and do not juggle between formal language and

colloquial or conversational language. Try to maintain the same tone throughout so that you sound authoritative on your subject.

To decide if you have addressed the title you should discuss your ideas on, and understanding of, the title with others in your class.

FINAL PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

Get somebody to read through the completed essay or leave it for a few days before reading it out loud to yourself. Look for the following:

- Check how paragraphs flow into each other
- Check spelling and punctuation
- Direct quotations of three lines or more should be indented from the margins of the main paragraph
- Review the choice of language and style. Use plain English. Short, clear sentences are preferable to long rambling sentences
- Eliminate jargon, slang or colloquialisms
- Keep to within the required word count
- Ensure all references and quotations are accurate
- Attach your bibliography/reference list
- Include page numbers
- Type write assignments using a size 12 font and either double or one and a half spacing
- Print your essay on plain white paper in a black font
- Staple the essay in the top left hand corner. A staple is sufficient. There is no need to use ring binders, plastic files/folders
- Attach and sign where necessary any required Assignment Submission Forms
- **SAVE YOUR ESSAY.** *Always keep a copy for yourself*
- **Ensure the essay is submitted before the deadline so as not to incur penalties**
- Submit your assignment in line with the requirements of your department or school

REFLECTION IN LEARNING

A number of influential educators (e.g., John Dewey, Paolo Freire, David Kolb, and Donald Schön) have written about the significant role reflection plays in learning. While we learn by doing, reflection helps us make sense of ideas and experiences. Therefore, reflection helps us construct and amend our knowledge and beliefs.

The word reflection can be problematic for some as it can be associated with unstructured thinking, rather than as critical engagement with learning.

REFLECTION: THE CONTINUUM

Stream of consciousness

Critical

Woolly

Objective

Self-indulgent

Engaged

Subjective

Insightful

Navel-gazing

Making meaning out of experience

Evidence of learning

Sometimes when people are asked to reflect on their learning, they assume this means that some form of free writing is required, so they produce a series of random thoughts on what has been experienced or learned. This is not the case. Rather than a stream of woolly thinking, your tutor will be looking for evidence of how your learning has been enhanced during a course or through participation in an activity.

REFLECTIVE WRITING

Reflective writing exercises are used to encourage students to think more deeply about course content, and what it means, both personally and for their discipline and profession. In an academic setting, when you are asked to write a reflective piece, whether this is a Learning Journal or a reflective response, you are being asked to use your creative and critical thinking skills to identify and name your learning. You should aim to document the impact of that learning on you, and on how your ideas, perspectives and actions have been influenced.

Assessment strategies ask you to reflect on your learning in order to:

- Foster communication between you and your tutor
- Increase active involvement in and ownership of your own learning
- Develop critical thinking and a questioning attitude
- Enhance the depth of your learning so that you move from superficial understandings of concepts and ideas to a more nuanced understanding
- Help you attain a better understanding of your own learning styles and skills and build an awareness of your own learning processes
- Enhance your problem solving capabilities
- Support planning and progress in research or a project
- Improve your writing and enhance creativity

Therefore, when you write a reflective piece you should aim to do (some of) the following:

- Name your learning and articulate your learning in your own voice
- Express your own personal insights
- Document your personal development
- Record how you have learned from experience
- Articulate how you make sense of ideas and experiences
- Demonstrate how your thinking and understanding has evolved
- Illustrate that you have considered questions of context
- Document what influences your thinking
- Give examples of how you have challenged or amended your assumptions
- Identify alternative possibilities or solutions
- Show that you have considered alternative ways of thinking
- Dispute ideas that you do not agree with
- Link ideas and prior learning; integrate ideas and tasks
- Demonstrate how you link theory and practice
- Apply your learning and suggest how you might use what you have learned
- Evaluate your learning and what helped or hindered your learning
- Detail plans for your future learning

This section now considers how you might document or add a reflective dimension to your work. It looks at:

- Journals: The Learning Journal; Starting your Journal
- Critical Reflection: What, So What, Now What?
- Structuring Learning Journals
- Criteria for Correction

JOURNALS

Journals are used in many settings, personally and professionally. While journal writing was often private and personal, with limited circulation, today more people write blogs, an electronic form of journal, to give their opinions, outline ideas or provide commentary. Whereas journals in the traditional format may have only been read by the writer, blogs tend to be interactive with scope for others to add comments.

Personally, you may keep a diary to:

- Record experiences
- Document memories
- Chart observations and feelings
- Chronicle life events
- Find out more about yourself
- Articulate feelings and anxieties
- Express opinions

In professional settings, journals can be used as a mechanism to encourage individuals to document experiences, or to identify patterns of behaviour. The aim of writing such journals is that they have a therapeutic or cathartic purpose, or serve as the basis for curative action so that habits can be improved or amended. For example, nutritionists often ask their clients to keep a food diary. The act of writing the food diary gets the person to think consciously about their eating. By seeing in print a record of the consumption of large amounts of sugary or fatty food, it is hoped the writer may rethink his/her diet. Increasingly, trainee teachers use learning journals to document their professional development, and acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. In this format, the journal is a record of practice and achievement and is a tool to identify why certain teaching strategies worked or failed. The journal is thus a means for teachers to think about their own practice and consider future learning goals and plans.

THE LEARNING JOURNAL

Within higher education, a reflective writing task often takes the form of a Learning Journal, which is a collection of reflective comments related to your educational activities or practices.

A Learning Journal is not a diary for private consumption, a log of daily activities, a summary of your readings in the course, or a track of your psychological state and your inner feelings about life. A Learning Journal is an intellectual exercise in describing and explaining your own observations and insights about a learning experience. It is a record of your personal growth through a course or placement.

The main aim of a Learning Journal is to foster critical thinking. The act of writing is associated with learning or the enhancement of learning: writing forces a learner to clarify thoughts, structure ideas and give voice to opinions. Journals encourage you to make your learning personal by thinking about and articulating your thoughts. Learning Journals also focus your attention on your own values, attitudes and beliefs and help you make these explicit when they might previously have been implicit and unexamined.

A Learning Journal provides a framework for you to communicate to your tutor your insights. You can use the journal to demonstrate your knowledge at the higher levels of learning which involve analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information. Journals allow you to reflect on all your learning and identify areas that you wish to pursue in more depth either inside or outside the education system.

Journals also give you the opportunity to write about course content in a more personal, way. Language in a journal tends to be expressive and closer to conversation than to the formal academic writing that is required in essay writing.

There are several items that you can choose to include in your journal:

1. **Insights you have on course content.** At what point did you finally understand a particular concept? What was it that gave you that understanding? Why had you had difficulties with this concept/theory in the past?
2. **Change of emphasis.** You might find you are suddenly placing more emphasis on some aspect of your course, or are more interested in an area of study, than you had originally thought. The fact that you had a change of emphasis is worth noting. Can you think why you are making that change and articulate it in your journal? Can you explain the value to your learning of making that change?
3. **The big picture.** How does your learning in this course link to what you are learning/have learned in other courses?

4. **Readings.** How has your reading around the course material informed or enhanced your understanding? How and why? What writers or ideas have stood out? Have you been inspired to read about related areas?
5. **Plans of action.** Do you have any ideas about further study in this area? You might wish to note thoughts that are not yet fully formed so that you can keep track of emerging ideas. You can then refine these ideas over time. Your feelings about the course and any plans you have to help yourself progress could be included.

STARTING YOUR JOURNAL

If you cannot think how you might start a journal, you could consider the following:

- What did I learn today?
- What did I find interesting?
- What did I find puzzling?
- Did I encounter any unexpected problems or issues?
- What learning highs did I experience?
- What learning lows did I experience?
- What do I feel about the way I am approaching the issue, subject or topic?
- How can I improve my learning techniques?
- What do I need to know more about?
- What other resources interested or inspired me (photos, websites etc)?
- How does my thinking compare to others in the group? Does it differ? If so, how and why?

CRITICAL REFLECTION

When you are asked to write a reflective piece, you should aim to demonstrate the links and relationships between course content and your own thoughts and perspectives. To move your reflective writing towards critical reflection, address the what, so what and now what questions:



You may wish to consider some of the following questions to help you move toward the critical end of the reflection continuum. Ensure that you answer a number of questions in each group, particularly in the so what and now what categories.

What?	<p><i>Content: Knowledge and comprehension</i></p> <p>Identify key learning</p> <p>Explain why this learning is important to you</p> <p>Describe and summarise ideas and theories succinctly</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is the context for your learning? i.e., what course are you studying?▪ Why are you undertaking this course?▪ What is the course aiming to accomplish?▪ What is the nature of the material you have been studying?▪ What issues are being addressed?▪ What are your key learning points on this course?▪ What are the main arguments and debates?▪ What ideas stand out for you and why?▪ What are the key academic concepts and theories you learned?▪ Why did these concepts and theories make an impression on you?▪ What ideas would you like to challenge and why?	

So what?

Analyse and Evaluate

Analyse your learning

Evaluate the difference this learning makes to your own understandings/assumptions/ideas/perspectives

- What are your new understandings and why?
- How has your academic understanding of the topic been enhanced?
- How can you demonstrate your grasp of the full complexities of the issue under discussion? E.g., What are the implications of diverging arguments /debates/ perspectives?
- What are the root causes of the problems addressed?
- What difference did your learning on this course make to your thinking?
- How have your ideas changed?
- How have your perspectives changed?
- How has your learning built on/enhanced/alterd previous learning?
- What example(s) could you use to illustrate your enhanced understanding? Why did you choose that example?
- How might you demonstrate that you have changed your thinking/perspective/behaviour?
- What personal assumptions did you bring to the situation?
- Have these assumptions been challenged? If so, how and why?
- What impacts on how you view the situation? Why?
- Which aspects of the course caused you difficulties? Why?
- What personal characteristics help you succeed in your studies? Why do you think this is?
- What personal characteristics provide particular challenges in your studies? Why do you think this is?
- What actions did you take to address any challenges you had during your studies?
- What was the best and worst part of the learning experience? Why?

Now what?

Apply and synthesise

- **Apply** your learning to your personal/professional experiences
- **Synthesise** ideas: combine your thoughts and ideas to demonstrate that your thinking is more complex and nuanced

- How might you apply what you learned?
- How will you use what you have learned?
- Have you identified any particular challenges that need to be addressed?
- What follow-up can you suggest to address any challenges or difficulties?
- How might your learning be contextualised, i.e., to a community/professional/personal setting?
- What would you like to learn more about? Why?
- How might you follow-up from what you have learned?
- If you were to do the course again, what might you do differently?
- How might you act differently in future?
- What are the broader implications of your learning?
- How has your learning value for you?
- How can you integrate your learning into your future studies?
- What are your future learning goals?

Tip: Potential outline for reflective piece

I have learned that....

I learned this when...

This learning matters because....

In light of this learning I will...

(Clayton, 2010)

STRUCTURING LEARNING JOURNALS

Learning Journals can be structured in a number of ways. Check with your tutor to see which way he/she would prefer you to compile your journal. Possible ways to structure a journal include:

Sequence of Daily Entries: The Learning Journal could contain an entry for each class, meeting, discussion or workshop that you participate in and regard as relevant to your learning plan. Each of these entries could reflect on the following:

- What was my aim for the event?
- What were my objectives?
- What did I review?
- What did I learn that was new?
- What did I find that was most useful from it?
- What did I not find useful about it?
- How could I apply what I have learnt in practice?

Beginning – Middle – End: In this format, you use the journal to document your understandings at various stages of your course, or placement. You note how your thinking evolves from the beginning of the course to the end. Rather than submit to your tutor a copy of your daily/weekly journal entries, this format allows you to select key points from each of these stages and elaborate on your learning.

Themes or Topics: Occasionally, your tutor may ask you to keep a journal, but rather than submit the journal in its entirety, you then select a number of themes or topics that you have found most interesting or relevant. Instead of submitting your work organised in a chronological format, you can write around topics of your choosing. This allows you to produce a more in-depth record of your learning.

Summary: Some tutors may prefer that you submit a summary of your journal, rather than submit the Learning Journal in its entirety. Therefore, you would review your work and select entries that best reflect your learning on the course.

Before submitting your journal, ensure you know which format your tutor requires. Learning Journals should be referenced fully as outlined in the referencing section of this booklet. They should also follow the presentation format outlined.

CRITERIA FOR CORRECTION

When reviewing your journal tutors will look for the following

- Evidence that your journal has been compiled regularly
- Clarity and observation in presentation ideas or opinions
- Relevance
- Appropriateness
- Evidence of creative thinking
- Evidence of critical thinking
- Relationship of journal entries to coursework
- Links between theory and practice
- Evidence of willingness to revise ideas
- Consideration of topic from different points of view
- Evidence of 'standing back from event'
- Application of different skills - synthesis, evaluation, comparison, analysis
- Awareness of your own learning style and process
- Evidence of outside reading
- Inclusion of additional material
- References
- Outlines of future work/plan of action