Essay Structure

The skill of good essay writing is to be able to critically discuss and evaluate ideas within a set word limit. The focus of an essay is usually on developing an argument or analysing ideas rather than on description. The essay is written in paragraphs and includes an introduction, body and conclusion.

Introduction

The introduction sets the scene for the whole essay. In a 1500 word essay, this could be a 150 word paragraph. You should not rewrite the essay question. Instead, the purpose of the introduction is to identify the topic, your point of view and the main reasons for that point of view.

Often this paragraph includes:

- An introductory sentence or two related directly to the question.
- A definition or explanation of a key term, appropriately cited. Any definition needs to come from your area of study.
- A clear statement of the focus of the essay or the position being argued, your thesis statement.
- Sentences that give a clear idea of what the essay will be about (content) and the direction (scope) the essay will take.

Body

In the paragraphs following the introduction, you critically discuss the main ideas supporting your position or response to the question. You use evidence from the scholarly readings to show the lecturer both your understanding of the topic and your ability to use the ideas to inform your own thinking and response to the question.

Each paragraph may include:

- A topic sentence: a statement of the main idea of the paragraph. This sentence may contain a link to the previous paragraph.
- An explanation or supporting evidence from the student's reading.
- Further evidence to discuss the position being argued.
- Application of these ideas to a scenario from the question or examples from experience or research.
- Your discussion of, comment on and evaluation of these ideas.
- A concluding sentence that brings the paragraph to a close and may link to the next paragraph.

Conclusion

The purpose of the conclusion is to summarise and make final evaluative comments on the ideas presented in the essay. It is crucial to link the conclusion to the essay question.

This paragraph includes:

- A brief summary of the main ideas presented in the essay.
- Confirmation of the thesis included in the introduction.
- Final evaluative comments on the relative importance of the arguments.
- Comments on the ongoing significance of the topic as an issue that needs further discussion or investigation.