

Student Assessment Resources

Essays

What is an essay and how does this help me learn?

The academic essay in university is a specific form of writing with particular practices and conventions. Essay writing at this level can involve identifying and analysing a topic or problem relevant to your module. It can also involve making a claim or assertion about a topic and supporting it with a substantial body of well-presented evidence.

Developing essay writing skills may require expanding your vocabulary, improving sentence structure and fluidity, and ensuring correct spelling and proper grammar are used. All of these skills will help to prepare you for your professional career, for example, when writing emails, cover letters, business proposals, reports, etc.

Writing essays provides you with an opportunity to deepen your knowledge of a relevant topic and to learn how to write in a scholarly way. In addition to developing your writing skills, preparing essays can enhance your critical thinking skills, communication skills and research skills.



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Which Graduate Attributes will this assessment help me develop?



Essays can help you to develop and improve some or all of the Graduate Attributes, depending on your experience and skill level, and the assessment criteria. Here are some examples:

- To Think Independently
 - Essays provide an opportunity to draw not only on relevant literature on your topic, but to practise critical thinking by stating and justifying a position of your own.
- To Communicate Effectively
 - For instance, your ability to convey clearly your position on a topic with supporting evidence.
- To Develop Continuously
 - Essay writing is an exercise that can always be improved upon; the more you practise, the more you can hone these skills.
- To Act Responsibly
 - Meeting deadlines requires careful planning ahead of time and follow-through.

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What is expected of me?

It is likely that your lecturer will provide you with a choice of questions or topics related to the material you are studying. The lecturer might provide you with a rubric or criteria that will be used to mark the essay.

The following are the kind of criteria that might be expected:

Content:

- Answers the question clearly and comprehensively, in a focused way
- Demonstrates characteristics such as insight, imagination, originality and creativity
- Exhibits sound critical thinking
- Demonstrates a clear comprehensive knowledge of the topic
- Exhibits independence of judgement
- Clearly explains relevant theory and cites relevant evidence
- Demonstrates the ability to integrate information
- Shows evidence of wide relevant reading and appropriate use of referencing
- Includes a sufficient number of appropriate examples

Cohesion and Style:

- Has an excellent structure and organisation
- Contains reasoned argument and comes to a logical conclusion
- Is lucid and well written
- Is correctly formatted and referenced
- Lacks errors of any significant kind

You may be asked to submit through a web-based essay submission platform such as Turnitin and Blackboard.

Further information

<http://student-learning.tcd.ie/undergraduate/topics/writing/essays/>

<https://www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/assets/pdf/eLearning/quickguides-turnitin/student-quickguide-turnitin.pdf>

For information on how to reference your sources correctly: <http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism>

