

1.

2.

3.

**BRAINSTORMING SHEET (GENERAL)**

This sheet will help you organise your thinking around your essay question by, firstly, breaking down the question into its sub-elements and, secondly, by expanding on those elements, a process that will be informed by your preliminary reading. The exercise will help you develop a basic outline for your essay and also to formulate a tentative thesis statement. It is best to write your thesis **after** you have gone through the brainstorming process. [See the reverse of this sheet for thesis examples.]

**ESSAY QUESTION**

**SUB ELEMENTS / KEY AREAS**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

4.

**YOUR TENTATIVE THESIS**

7.

6.

5.

## What is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement is a brief summary of what the essay will conclude about the topic. It is usually no more than a sentence or two and appears in the introduction, generally towards the end. However, it can also appear elsewhere in the introduction.

Below are three examples of an introduction each of which includes a thesis statement. The thesis statements are italicised. However, you should NOT italicise your thesis statements.

Example 1, based on the topic: **Drawing on the Bible, discuss the concept that we are valued by God.**

This essay opens where the Bible begins, with the creation of this world by God, focusing particularly on the creation of man in God's image. The essay then explores God's interaction with His chosen people, the Children of Israel, an interaction that culminated in Calvary where God stepped into human history for the eternal benefit of all mankind. *The essay submits that it is God's intervention at Calvary that truly demonstrates the extreme value that God places on us, His human family.*

Example 2, based on the topic: **How can the Christian show the non-believer that Christ is the answer to his or her needs?**

People, generally, do not consider the eternal perspective when expressing their needs, but see those needs in a temporal context. This poses a particular challenge to the Christian witness who seeks to convince non-believers that Jesus is the answer to their needs. In discussing how the Christian witness can persuade the non-believer that Christ is the answer to his or her needs, this essay begins by identifying those needs in their "authentic circumstance", the restoration of humankind to its original God-ordained estate. The essay then briefly explores the human tendency to see needs in a temporal setting dominated by a reverence for science, before suggesting how the Christian witness might go about persuading non-believers to identify their needs in a fresh light and so direct them to Jesus as the best answer to those needs. *The essay argues that helping the non-believer to see his or her needs in the context of eternity is a critical first step in reaching the non-believer for Christ, but that this focus on eternal priorities does not mean that temporal needs should be ignored or minimised.*

Example 3, based on the topic: **Are we responsible to future generations for the kind of environment we pass on to them?**

The essay begins by briefly describing the impact that past and present generations have had on the environment. Then follows a discussion on the concept of ecological responsibility, especially in the context of a world that is home to a succession of generations. Do we really have that responsibility? Or are we responsible for our actions only as far as they affect us here and now? What ethical considerations apply? The essay then explores the issue from the perspective of future generations. What rights do they have? Are these rights the same as ours? Can we assume that advances in technology will help to meet those rights? *The essay asserts that, yes, we do have a responsibility to future generations and suggests some practical means whereby we might meet that responsibility.*

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Please note that not all essays will call for a thesis statement; however, most essays will require such a statement. If your essay topic asks you to come to some sort of conclusion about a topic, or calls on you to argue for a particular position, or poses a question to which you are expected to give a considered response, then a thesis statement is necessary.

You should also be aware that there might be some subtle differences in the style and format of the introduction according to the discipline in which you are writing the essay or assignment. Generally, the introduction will briefly introduce the question to be answered, will identify the significant areas that the paper will cover, will indicate the order in which these will be covered, and will offer a thesis statement. If you have any questions about the appropriate style of an introduction for particular assignments, you should consult your lecturer.

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