ESSAY FEEDBACK FORM

This form is used to give specific feedback to students who bring their essays to the tutors for comment and advice. However, the form is useful in a general sense to all students who wish to improve their essay writing because it gives helpful advice about the various aspects of writing an essay, such as the introduction etc. We invite you to paste the form to your desktop so that you can readily use it as a self-check-list to assess your essay drafts. See also the second page of the form which gives details about three common sentence errors and how to remedy these errors.

1. Deficient: Serious & consistent effort essential. 2. Marginal: Significant improvement needed.

3. Satisfactory: More effort recommended. 4. Above Average: Aim even higher. 5. Distinction: Amen!

INTRODUCTION   1 2 3 4 5
- **Opens with a brief background statement** which "serves as a bridge to link the reader to the topic of the essay" (Xudong, 2003), and thus begins to establish the context of the essay. [See the first two sentences in the sample introduction below.]
- **Amplifies the context of the essay by identifying the central topic to be explored.** [See the third sentence (especially the second half) in the sample introduction.]
- **Further amplifies the context by identifying the main areas to be explored and the sequence in which this will be done.** [See the third sentence in sample introduction.]
- **Includes a one-sentence thesis statement** that summarises the conclusion drawn by the essay, and often begins: "This paper argues that...."

BODY/ARGUMENT   1 2 3 4 5
- **Fulfils the promise of the introduction.**
- **Presents a coherent, in-depth argument and thus fully develops the thesis.**
- **Demonstrates a clear sense of purpose & development** via a logical sequence of well-linked and focused paragraphs (each of which will develop a single idea).
- **Supports claims with relevant/reliable evidence.**
- **Is free of plagiarism.**

CONCLUSION   1 2 3 4 5
[Note: The function of the conclusion is to remind your reader "of the strengths of the argument [by reiterating] the most important evidence supporting the argument" (Woodward-Kron, Thompson, & Meek, 2000). Thus, a good conclusion is not simply a summary of the main points of the paper, but is a neat synthesis of those main points.]
- **Echoes the introduction by briefly summarising and synthesising (integrating into a neat whole) the main points of the essay, and by restating the thesis.**
- **Gives a sense of closure.** [See the final sentence in the sample conclusion below.]
- **Avoids using an opening phrase such as "in conclusion".** [This is unnecessary.]
- **Does not introduce new ideas.**

ABSTRACT   1 2 3 4 5
- **Offers a concise overview of the essay, giving details of the context (what was researched and why), the findings and the conclusion (thesis statement).**

EXPRESSION   1 2 3 4 5
- **Clear, error-free prose, in acceptable academic style; appropriate punctuation.**

REFERENCING   YES / NO
- **In-text referencing follows a set style (APA etc.).**
- **Includes at least one citation per body paragraph.**
- **Does not include too many direct quotes, and is free of plagiarism.**
- **The reference list is appropriately set out according to the chosen style.**

GENERAL FORMAT   YES / NO
- **Essay format follows set guidelines.**

EXAMPLE OF AN ABSTRACT, INTRODUCTION, AND THE CONCLUSION FOR THE FOLLOWING ESSAY TOPIC.

Briefly summarise recent research (since 2000) into the mood-enhancing effect of exercise and then compare and contrast any two pieces of research and say, giving your reasons, which of the two is the more robust and useful.

Ab'ct: There is general consensus among researchers that physical exercise exerts a positive influence on mood. After summarising recent research, the paper focused on the work of Simon Lowe and Jane Harris, comparing and contrasting their research to assess their relative merits. The paper found that it is the work of Harris that is more robust and useful, arguing that this is because of her larger and more balanced sample size, her strong focus on the social aspect of exercise, the fact that her research was conducted over a significantly longer period, and her more accessible writing style. **[97 words]**

Intro: Research generally confirms that physical exercise, at appropriate levels, has a positive effect on mood. Two researchers who have studied this phenomenon are Simon Lowe and Jane Harris. This paper begins with an overview of recent research into the mood-enhancing effect of exercise, and then turns to the work of Lowe and Harris, comparing and contrasting their research to assess their relative merits. The paper argues that it is the work of Harris that is more robust and useful because of her larger and more balanced sample size, her specific focus on the social context of exercise, the fact that her research was conducted over a much longer period, and her more accessible writing style. **[115 words]**

Concl: Following its overview of recent research into the effect of exercise on mood, the essay focused on the work of Lowe and Harris, comparing and contrasting their research in order to assess their relative merits. The essay argued that the work of Harris is more robust and useful because of her larger and more balanced sample size, her focus on the social context of exercise, the extended period of her research, and her accessible writing style. The fact that Harris' research included a very large number of subjects and categorised these across a wide range of age groups is of particular interest because it embraces most of those seeking physical and emotional health in exercise, and might well encourage others to join them. **[123 words]**

Three common sentence errors and how to remedy these

Sentence errors are due either to a lack of understanding about sentence formation, or a lack of care. The remedy to both is in your hands. Taking care with one's writing is an obvious first step, and we all need to do this. The second step is to be sensitive to how sentences are written, especially those that are written by capable writers. This means you will also concentrate on reading more, and do so with real purpose. As you read these writers, try to gain an appreciation of the **flow** and **balance** and **unity** of each sentence, and **how they combine to flesh out the theme** of each paragraph. If you do this proactively (that is, eagerly), you will find that your capacity to write sound, well-formed sentences will begin to grow, almost without you realising that this is happening. In the meantime, let us look at three common errors found in student papers, and show you how to avoid these. These errors are: run-on sentences; sentence fragments; and overloaded sentences.

1) **Run-on Sentences:** These are sentences that run beyond the point where they should stop and a new sentence begin. Below are three examples of run-on sentences. In each case the run-on element is <u>underlined</u>.

☹ *Peter dawdled on his way home <u>he was late for supper</u>.*
☹ *We cannot find Eva anywhere <u>everyone is worried</u>.*
☹ *I am enjoying this book <u>it is well-written and interesting</u>.*

Run-on sentences are usually resolved by inserting a semicolon, a conjunction, or by writing two sentences.

☺ *Peter dawdled on his way home; he was late for supper.*   **[Semicolon]**
☺ *We cannot find Eva anywhere; everyone is worried.*   **[Semicolon]**
☺ *I am enjoying this book; it is well-written and interesting.*   **[Semicolon]**
☺ *Peter dawdled on his way home **and** he was late for supper.*   **[Conjunction]**
☺ *We cannot find Eva anywhere **and** everyone is worried.*   **[Conjunction]**
☺ *I am enjoying this book **because** it is well-written and interesting.*   **[Conjunction. You could also use 'for' or 'as.]**
☺ *Peter dawdled on his way home. He was late for supper.*   **[Two sentences]**
☺ *We cannot find Eva anywhere. Everyone is worried.*   **[Two sentences]**
☺ *I am enjoying this book. It is well-written and interesting.*   **[Two sentences]**

2) **Sentence Fragments:** A proper sentence has a subject, a finite verb that is linked to that subject, and it presents a complete thought. Thus it can stand alone. While a sentence fragment might include a subject and a verb, it invariably fails to present a complete thought and cannot stand alone. Its full meaning is usually dependent on another sentence, usually the preceding one. Below are three examples of sentence fragments. These are <u>underlined</u>. Notice how the full meaning of each fragment is dependent on the preceding sentence. This preceding sentence can be described as the 'context sentence' because it provides the context in which the fragment can be fully understood.

☹ *John is selling his house. <u>Because he wants to move to Brisbane</u>.*
☹ *Avondale is a privately-owned tertiary college. <u>In the Cooranbong area</u>.*
☹ *I will do well in the exam. <u>Unless there is a question on bio-ethics</u>.*

Sentence fragments are usually resolved by linking them directly with the 'context sentence' as follows:

☺ *John is selling his house because he wants to move to Brisbane.*
☺ *Avondale is a privately-owned tertiary college in the Cooranbong area.*
☺ *I will do well in the exam unless there is a question on bio-ethics.*   **[Alternatively, you could write the following sentence.]**
☺ *Unless there is a question on bio-ethics, I will do well in the exam.*   **[Notice the comma.]**

3) **Overloaded Sentences:** An overloaded sentence is a sentence that tries to cover too much ground and, as a result, staggers along under a load of confusing detail. A good sentence focuses on a single idea and comes directly to the point without wandering all over the place. Below are two examples of overloaded sentences.

☹ *Teachers need to realise that the education of a child is a critical undertaking and should be carried out with care and consistency so that the child can gain maximum benefit from each educational episode in order to set a solid foundation for any follow-up teaching, especially during the early years of primary school.*
☹ *The preparation and delivery of God-filled sermons are arguably the two most important tasks of Christian ministry and these cannot be adequately undertaken unless the minister is fully committed to his or her role as a minister, and at the same time enjoys a rich and fulfilling communion with Christ in order to maintain a vital connection to the very source of truth that should underpin that ministry.*

Overloaded sentences can be resolved by re-writing them as two or more sentences, and by being more direct.

☺ *The teaching of a child in the early primary years is a critical undertaking that should be carried out carefully and consistently. This enables the child to gain maximum benefit from each educational episode, which provides a solid foundation for follow-up teaching.*   **[43 words in three sentences versus 55 words in one sentence.]**
☺ *Two vital tasks of Christian ministry are the preparation and delivery of God-filled sermons. To do this effectively the minister should be fully committed to ministry and enjoy a rich communion with Christ who is the very source of truth that underpins ministry.*   **[44 words in two sentences versus 69 words in one sentence.]**

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