

### ***Preparing a Major Assignment or Writing an Essay***

The first step when preparing for any assignment or essay is to understand what it is. Look at the subject outline and find when it is due and how long it needs to be, and then break the question down. Ask yourself the following: is there more than one part to the question? What parts of the question need to be covered in depth? Is there anything else you would like to include?

Once you are clear on the question, gather as much information as you can through class handouts, lecture notes, class reading lists, textbooks, Library books, appropriate magazines and quality Internet sources. Information from the Internet that has copyright, and a publisher are more academically trustworthy than those that don't.

A well informed essay or assignment will include as much relevant information as possible from various sources, and your lecturer will expect you to include all areas covered in class and more.

When you go to the Library, skim reference books and, in order to avoid plagiarism, make sure you keep track of what you use by creating a bibliography that will eventually be used at the end of your essay. Bibliography styles differ between faculties, so check with your lecturer what they prefer. An ideal bibliography should have at least 10 entries, and some may have over 30.

The best way to skim a book for material is to turn to the index and look for key, relevant words. For example, if you were doing an essay on climate change, you may search for climate change or global warming.

If you find a relevant item, go to the page(s) and scan it to see if it is relevant to your question. If so, take notes, including quotes from the book, the general idea of what was said, and your response to the information.

Once you have enough information, write an outline for your essay that includes an introduction, body and conclusion, and then assign how many words you think are needed for each point in order to ensure you meet the word count of the essay as painlessly as possible.

- **Introduction:** This is where you state what your stance on the question is and how you intend to answer it.
- **Body:** This is where you prove that your answer is valid. The body usually has three unique but connected points that all support your answer.
- **Conclusion:** This is usually only one or two paragraphs long. It should recap your main points and confirm your answer while summing up your argument succinctly.

Rules of writing may vary between assignments, so always check with your lecturer about what is expected.

Once you have written your essay, check to see if it flows either by re-reading it or by speaking it out-loud. Then you will need to make a cover, a bibliography, and in some cases a synopsis.

- **Cover:** This should include the title (i.e. the question or topic you have researched), your name, the class name, the lecturers name, the due date and a signed declaration saying you have not plagiarised.
- **Bibliography:** This is usually the last page, and is the complete list of references you have collected from any and all types of sources.
- **Synopsis:** This follows the cover page and gives a brief overview of the introduction, body, and conclusion of your research.

Once you have finished your essay or assignment, hand it in and then take a break by rewarding yourself with something you enjoy!