

Higher Education Language & Presentation Support

# Writing an Essay

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## HELPS (Higher Education Language & Presentation Support)

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# David Sotir - Advisor

- What's the **purpose** of the essay?
- What does the **structure** look like?
- How can you **plan** for it?

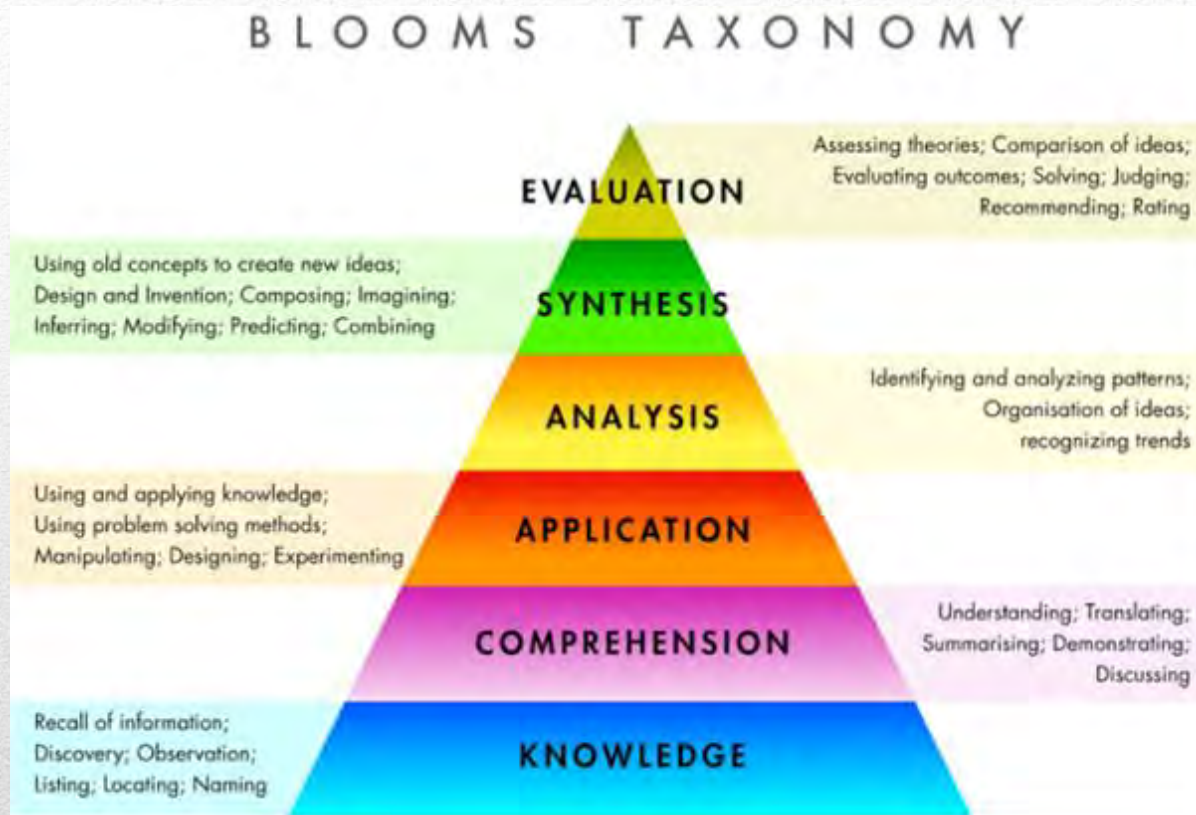
# Essays

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## What is expected of university students?

- University students are not only required to acquire knowledge and demonstrate their comprehension of what they have learnt but they must also be able to show that they are able to **apply that knowledge** appropriately within their discipline.
- In order to further progress along the continuum of learning, they must be able to **analyse and synthesise** information, theories and concepts, and then **critically evaluate** such information to question its validity, further develop ideas, make recommendations, devise solutions, and discuss implications.

# Academic Thinking Skills



Adapted from: Vanden Zander, W. J., 1984, *Bachelor of Building in Construction Economics – Preparatory Studies*, course notes, UTS, Sydney.

# Academic Thinking Skills

- Essay
- Report
- Case study (practice/theory; problem/possible solutions)
- Critique (analyse and evaluate - text, theory, practice, person)
- Literature Review (read topic widely; evaluate each text)
- Reflective Journal (map your learning/thinking)
- Research Review (examine research against set of questions)
- Abstract/Executive Summary/Synopsis (separate summary)
- Annotated bibliography (overview and relevance of text)

# Types of Assignments

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Better academic results require deeper analysis. This means drawing on sources, identifying contrasting positions, identifying outcomes and implications and critically commenting on the theory.

## The cat sat on the mat

- **Fail** The cat sat on the **ground**
- **Fail/ Pass** The cat sat on the **mat**
- **Pass** The cat sat on the mat. The outcome of this was that the mat became flat, **and this indicates that** cats should be kept off mats.
- **Credit** The cat sat on the mat. The outcome of this was that the mat became flat, and this indicates that cats should be kept off mats. **Studies by Smith (1996, p. 7) show that cats sitting on mats have a positive effect on mat compressibility.**
- **D / HD** The cat sat on the mat. The outcome of this was that the mat became flat, and this indicates that cats should be kept off mats. **Studies by Smith (1996, p. 7) show that cats sitting on mats have a positive effect on mat compressibility. In contrast, Brown (1997, p. 34) claims that** cats do not make mats flat. **However, his observation** was based on a study of newborn kittens so this **cannot be judged as reliable**. Therefore, if mats are to be kept in an uncompressed condition, it is preferable that cats not be allowed to sit on them.

Adapted from Jones, G. 2006. *UOSS Course*, The Learning Centre, UNSW, Sydney

# Fail vs. D/ HD

## Essay Types

- **Expository or Explanatory**

(informs and explains)

- A Description of events (history) or a process (science)
- An Explanation of something (causes-outcomes)
- Comparison/Contrast eg. Compare theme in poems; compare policies of political parties

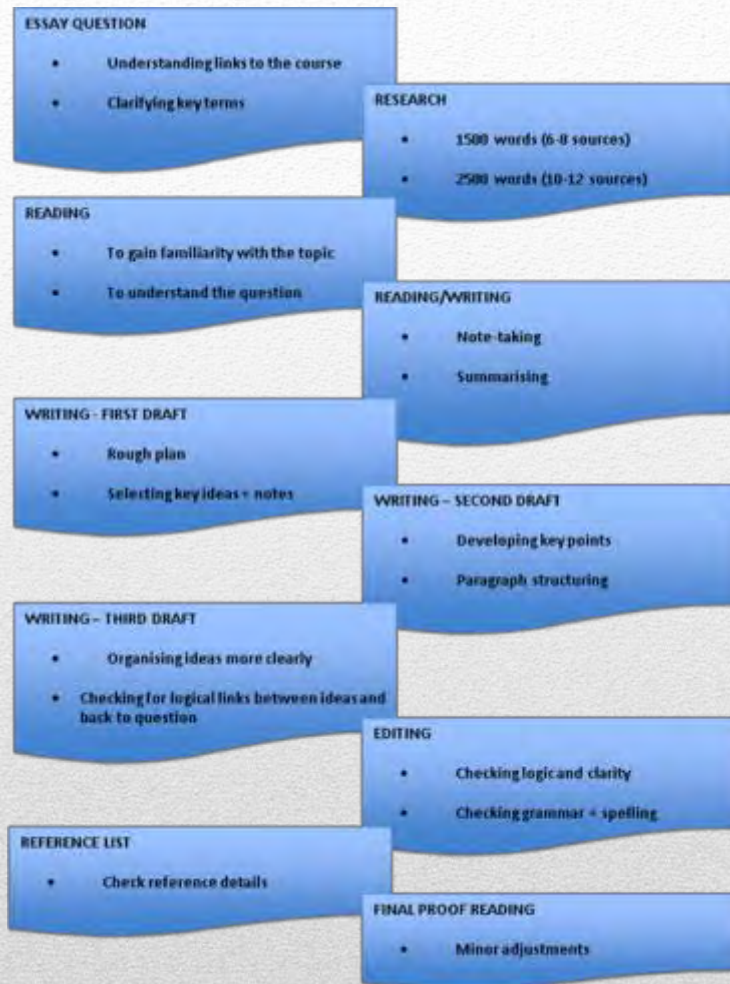
- **Discussion/Argument Essay**

(presents arguments; points of view; supports view with evidence; compares and contrasts other views)

Essay Types – **what's the**  
purpose?

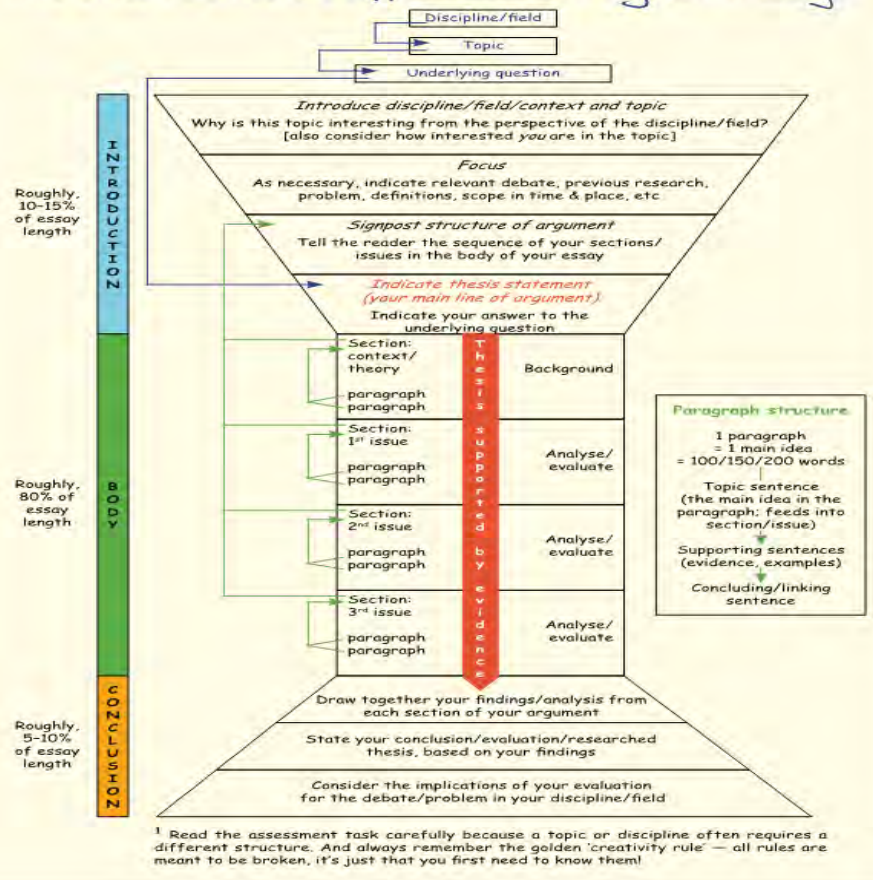
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# The Writing Process

## How effective structure supports reasoned argument in essays<sup>1</sup>



# Essay Structure

- HELPS website

<http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/writing/essay.html>

- To see how an essay is planned from question to 1<sup>st</sup> draft:

Monash University, 2012, *Language and Learning Online*, Sydney, viewed 23 January 2012,

<http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lionline/writing/index.xml>

- Essay Structure: go to page 2 of visual guide to writing at aall.org.au

[www.aall.org.au/sites/default/files/.../essayWritingVisualGuide.pdf](http://www.aall.org.au/sites/default/files/.../essayWritingVisualGuide.pdf)

# More on Essay Structure

- Weekly workshops
- Drop-in consultations
- Writing clinics
- Conversations@UTS
- Intensive academic English programs
- Self-help learning resources

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