



INTERMEDIATE STAFF COURSE ESSAY WRITING HANDBOOK

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT CENTRE
DEFENCE ACADEMY
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(1st edition)

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A GUIDE TO WRITING AND PRESENTING ESSAYS¹

This guide is designed to remove the mystery and anxiety surrounding essay writing.

1. What Do Essays Involve?

Essays will often ask you to answer a question. However, an essay topic may also be a statement which will contain a key word which is a guide to how you should set about answering it:

Evaluate – requires you to assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something using evidence. There will probably be cases to be made both for and against.

Analyse – requires you to examine in very close detail, identify important points and key features.

Compare – requires you to closely examine the similarities with, and differences between, the issues in the essay question.

Contrast – requires you to isolate and discuss the differences between aspects of the essay question.

Compare and Contrast – show how two or more things are similar or different. Indicate the relevance or consequences. If appropriate, give reasons why one might be preferable.

Define – give the exact meaning of. Where relevant, show that you understand why the definition may be problematic.

Describe – give a detailed account in words of.

Examine – put the subject ‘under the microscope’, looking at in detail. If appropriate, critically evaluate it as well.

Explain – make clear why something happens or why it is the way it is.

List – put in sequence.

Outline – give only the main points, showing the main structure.

Show – indicate, give evidence, make clear, demonstrate, illustrate.

Most importantly, all essays demand that you present an argument. This argument must be one which is based on reading about the topic, thinking about the topic, working out what **YOU** think about the topic and then writing an essay which presents your argument in a convincing way.

¹ This guide is adapted from ‘A Guide to Writing and Presenting Essays’ produced by the Faculty of Arts, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.

What does 'to present your argument' actually mean? Your argument is an academic way of saying 'your opinion'. In research essay writing, you must be willing to give your opinion on a topic and when you support and confirm this opinion with evidence from a variety of sources, it becomes your argument.

For example, a chosen essay topic might be:

Evaluate the re-emergence of China as a major power in the last decade, which will have a profound effect on the world.

At least three arguments or opinions are possible with this essay topic:

- China's re-emergence may have a profound effect.
- You may consider that it will not, or
- You may think that a firm opinion on such an important issue cannot be decided yet.

Sometimes your argument may change as you progress through the reading and writing. This is a natural process, which reflects that you are learning about the topic as you read. But whatever your opinion, make sure that it is consistent throughout your essay.

Note: If your essay question contains a statement in quote marks, you do not have to agree with it. Usually such statements are controversial.

It is most important that your essay is not descriptive – that it does not simply describe the topic, use personal anecdotes or restate the question – but that it answers the question or topic set by you or your DS. You should do this by presenting an argument which is supported by evidence – evidence from a variety of books, articles or internet sources – and forms a logical conclusion at the end. This is what DS look for in a good essay.

Research essays offer you the opportunity to show:

- What you know about a topic.
- How much you have read and learned.
- Your ability to critically handle material on a particular topic, and
- Your ability to think and write about the topic in a structured way.

Your DS are looking for an essay which is:

- Well thought-out.
- Well-argued.
- Well-written.

2. **How To Begin An Essay**

First. Select a **topic** that you have a strong interest in.

Second. Begin to make a **plan**. Write down all you know about the subject, and form it into a plan in note form. Continue to add to, or alter this plan until you feel you can begin writing. Continue to refer to your plan until you have finished writing.

Third. Gather together and begin to **read** selected texts on your chosen topic (In reality, essay planning and research need to be done together). Useful texts can be chosen from:

- Books & E-books.
- Articles in edited books.
- Articles in journals.
- Primary Sources (Historical Source; Legislation; Cases; Report)
- Internet/Websites.
- Newspapers.
- Theses
- Multimedia/Audio-Visual

While reading these and taking notes, it is important to remember the **publication details** of what you have read. There are two reasons for this:

- You can find again **‘that’** important detail or passage you wish to include in your essay!
- While drafting your essay, you need to include **References** to acknowledge all quotes, ideas and information that are included.

So, keep a record of the details of each text you read, including page numbers, even if it does not seem immediately useful. This is particularly important if you are reading texts on the internet, as items there often change ‘position’ within search engines. If you are using photocopied pages of some texts, useful points and passages can be underlined and/or notes made beside them. Otherwise, it may be a case of ‘Help! Where is that really useful quote that I wanted to include?’

Fourth. When you have finished your reading, taken notes and worked out your essay plan you can begin to write your essay. Make sure you give this process plenty of time, not the night before the essay is due! Remember, a last minute essay is most often a poor essay.

3. **Constructing A Good Essay**

An essay should be a clear, coherent, logical piece of writing which answers the topic, using clear, grammatically correct English with precise references.

Every essay should have a clear structure:

- a. **Essay question** – ensure that you write the question or topic you are addressing at the cover page. Do not change it in any way. Also make sure you answer it accurately.
- b. **Introduction** – should be one paragraph long, and should:
 - Set the scene of your topic or question – General Statement
 - Explain briefly how this will be done – Thesis Statement

All this prepares the reader for what is to follow in the body.

Example of an essay **introduction**:

Topic: Do you think the ‘war on terror’ has been successful? (2500 words)

On 11th September 2001, the world was shocked by the attacks by Al Qaeda on New York and Washington. The US government immediately reacted to this devastating attack on its homeland by declaring a ‘war against terror’. But, has the ‘war on terror’ been successful? This essay will address the above topic by first examining definitions of terrorism. It will then look at Al Qaeda and other global terrorist groups to try to understand the reasons for their actions. The track record of the ‘war on terror’ will then be examined, as will reactions to it in some parts of the world.

- c. **Body of the essay** – by far the largest part, here you offer your argument which is your answer to the topic or question, argued

logically, using examples, quotes and references. It is organised in sections and each section is made up of a combination of paragraphs of a similar theme.

d. **Conclusion** – should be one paragraph long, and should:

- Restate your findings – Thesis Restatement
- Include summary of main mains.
- Indicate some of the implications of your argument.
- But **NOT** include new information.

Example of an essay **conclusion**:

Topic: Do you think the ‘war on terror’ has been successful? (2500 words)

This essay has examined the ‘war on terror’ declared by the USA following the attacks on its homeland in September 2001 to see if it has been successful. This essay has concluded that it is too difficult at this time (with a new US president in office) to give a definite answer to this question. Many of the issues associated with outbreaks of global terrorism since that time remain clouded in controversy or misinformation. However, it is likely that terrorist attacks by Al Qaeda and similar ‘jihadist’ groups will continue for the foreseeable future.

In other words, the **Introduction** of an essay says what you are going to say, the **Body** says it, and the **Conclusion** says what you have said!!

e. **Completing your essay** – when you think you have finished writing your essay, you cannot relax just quite yet! You must read and edit your essay at least once before you submit it, ensuring that there are no language or typo errors and that your argument is convincing. It is also a good idea to get someone else to read it, both to notice those little errors you have missed and to see if the essay does answer the topic.

A completed essay must include:

- A system of **referencing** that acknowledges the sources of all information – either ideas or quotes - used in the essay.

- A **Reference** list attached at the end, which lists all publications used in the essay. (The references must be listed in alphabetical order of surnames/family names).

Section 5 below on referencing contains information on how to reference your essay and how to compile a Reference. It is essential to list ALL the books, articles and websites you have used in your essay in a Reference at the end. Ensure that each reference of this is presented **CORRECTLY** in the text of your essay, so read the referencing notes below carefully! See the referencing sections for an example of a Reference.

The following is a handy checklist for essay preparation.
Have you:

- ✓ Written the essay topic at the start of your essay?
- ✓ Used an appropriate number of academic texts?
- ✓ Provided an accurate and complete Reference?
- ✓ Given references in the essay for all **quotations** and **ideas** and material taken from other sources?
- ✓ Drawn upon theories introduced in lectures and readings?
- ✓ Answered the whole question?
- ✓ Stayed on the topic?
- ✓ Kept to the word limit?
- ✓ Edited for coherence and repetition?
- ✓ Proof read for spelling, expression and syntax?

4. **Guidelines for Assessment Criteria**

Marking Scheme

A Excellent 80-100% - Distinction

Shows originality, fluency, impressively developed argument and extensive subject knowledge, and an ability to assess and utilise a theoretical framework. Sophisticated expression and structure.

B Good 70-79% - Merit

Draws confidently upon a number of sources, contains a clear argument supported by evidence, goes well beyond basic understanding of the topic, may include a theoretical framework for discussion, clear expression.

C Satisfactory 60-69% - Pass

Good understanding of the topic, answers the question directly and effectively, presentation of supporting evidence for argument, may

include a theoretical framework for discussion, only minor problems with clarity and expression.

D Weak 50-59% - Fail

Some understanding of the topic, presentation of some supporting evidence for argument, may have problems with clarity and expression, displays some effort, but may include some repetition.

E Poor below 49% - Fail

Lacks a basic understanding of the topic and relevant theories, offers little or no supporting evidence and generally reflects a level of effort well below that expected.

How Your Essay is Marked

The features of an essay that the DS assess, and their loading are as follows:

Introduction	10%
Body (Analysis)	40%
Conclusion	10%
Structure of essay	10%
Research and Referencing	20%
Presentation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Note: Despite the essay is not an English Language test, marks generally are deducted for language errors.

5. Referencing

It is essential that you give references in your essay for all the sources you have used. The RBAF uses the **OXFORD** referencing system (which includes footnotes).

Oxford System – Referencing

The Oxford system of referencing is preferred by many academics because additional information that may seem awkward in the text can be included in the footnotes. Also, more detail about sources used can be provided than with

the Harvard system. Remember, all direct quotations, paraphrases, ideas or information used in your essay must be acknowledged with a reference.

In the first footnote used for each separate source, the details you must provide are:

- ✓ Author(s) first name and surname(s)
- ✓ Title of the article, book or journal
- ✓ Editors (if applicable)
- ✓ Publisher location and name
- ✓ Year published
- ✓ Exact page number(s).

Examples of footnote references using the Oxford system:

Book (Single Author)

¹¹ I. Reid, *Higher Education or Education for Hire? Language and Values in Australian Universities*, Rockhampton, CQU Press, 1996, p. 87.

Book (2 or 3 Authors)

¹² A. Blackledge and A. Creese, *Multilingualism: a Critical Perspective*, London, Continuum, 2000, p. 10.

Book (4 or more Authors)

¹³ A. Kring et al., *Abnormal Psychology*, 11th edn., New York, John Wiley & Sons, 2010, p. 40.

Book (Chapter or Article in Edited Book)

¹⁴ J. Baker, 'The Place of Science and Technology in the Wise Management of the Great Barrier Reef', in E. Wolanski (ed.), *Oceanographic Processes of Coral Reefs: Physical and Biological Links in the Great Barrier Reef*, Boca Raton, CRC Press, 2001, p. 14-20.

E-Book

¹⁵ V. Koller, *Metaphor and Gender in Business Media Discourse: A Critical Cognitive Study*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 75-80. Available from: E-Book Library, (accessed 23 February 2017).

Journal Article (Single Author - Print)

¹⁶ M. Doyle, 'Captain Mbaye Diagne', *Granta*, vol. 48, no. 1, 1994, p. 99.

Journal Article (2 or 3 Author - Print)

¹⁷ M. Addo and N. Besnier, 'When Gifts Become Commodities: Pawnshops, Valuables, and Shame in Tonga', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2008, p. 39.

Journal Article (Website)

¹⁸ K. R. Moore, 'Was Pythagoras Ever Really in Spart?', *Rosetta*, no. 6 Spring, 2009, p. 3, <http://www.rosetta.bham.ac.uk>, (accessed 10 September 2010).

Newspaper Article (Print)

¹⁹ R. Boyd, 'The City of Sordid Splendour', *The Australian*, 26 August 2006, p. 10.

Newspaper Article (Website)

²⁰ S. Bredow, 'Powder to the People', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 2008, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/ski/powder-to-the-people/2008/222.html>, (accessed 3 March 2009).

Website

²¹ B. Dibble and B. Milech, *Elizabeth Jolley Research Collection*, [Website], 2010, <http://john.curtin.edu.au/jo;ey/index.html>, (accessed 1 August 2012).

Citing Information (Secondary Source)

²² A. Smith, *Italian Architecture*, Melbourne, Penguin, 2000, cited in D. Brown, *Renaissance Italy*, London, Faber and Faber, 2002, p. 45.

Second and subsequent references to the same work:

If the reference is to a work already cited immediately above, use *ibid* (means – the same). For a subsequent reference that is *not* a work cited immediately above use author and short title, as with the example.

Oxford Referencing System

Clearly, the calamitous events in the US on 11th September 2001 brought the post-cold war era suddenly, dramatically and irrefutably to an end. The world collectively and psychologically has since entered into a new period of as yet unknown character, but postulations like the 'Age of Anxiety'² and 'Age of Terror'³ in the proliferation of publications since that date suggest that terrorism, or fear of terrorism will feature highly in its make-up. Terrorism now seems to dominate all forms of media, presented in most parts of the world and at most times of the day. The watching public has been treated almost daily to reports of car bombings, suicide bombings, rocket attacks, kidnappings, assassinations and beheadings. New, or lesser known names or phrases associated with these events – al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, World Trade Centre, Taliban, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saddam Hussein, weapons of mass destruction, suicide bomber, Jihad and 'global war on terror,' for example – are now recognised globally, by world leaders and school children alike.

References to footnotes in the text should be numbered. Remember, all quotes ideas and information from other sources must be referenced.

There is nothing new about terrorism – its lineage easily can be traced back to the 'terror' of the French Revolution, and even to Roman times. But until the September 2001 attacks on the US, terrorism, as a socio-political term and as a phenomenon, it lacked a definitive profile. However, in the wake of these audacious and deadly strikes by al-Qaeda on the world's only superpower, the Bush administration quickly cut through any uncertainty in its own collective thought patterns regarding terrorism by issuing the now familiar 'you are either with us or with the terrorists'⁴ statement to initiate a global war on terror. In the *Realpolitik* corridors of power, this effectively labelled any group resisting a government favoured by the US as a terrorist organization, whatever its *raison d'être*.⁵ Concomitantly, the US claimed the right of pre-emptive strikes anywhere in the globe to prevent such an attack on its soil again. And rightly so, though many commentators⁶ as further unexpected and bloody terrorist attacks in Bali, Jakarta, Istanbul, Madrid and London soon followed.

² C. W. Kegley (ed.), *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2003, p. 3.

³ S. Rogers, 'Beyond the Abu Sayyaf: the Lessons of Failure in the Philippines', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 1, 2004, p. 15.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵ The reverse also seems to follow, for the US government, prior to the terrorist attacks on its homeland, had listed the Iranian MEK (Mujahideen-e-Khalq) organization as a proscribed terrorist group, but more recently has classified it as 'protected' under the Geneva Convention. *Janes World Insurgency and Terrorism* suggest that the group, which is still viewed by Iran as its major terrorist threat, are for the US a significant information source of the Iranian nuclear program.

⁶ Kegley, *New Global Terrorism*, p. 56-58.

6. **References**

All the sources of information you have used in your essay must be referenced, as noted above. They must also be listed at the end of your essay in **REFERENCES**. You must use the same system of referencing – Oxford – for your reference list as you have used for referencing in the text of your essay.

Reference lists ('lists of works cited') contain a complete list of all the sources (books, journal articles, websites, etc.) that you have cited directly in a document. That means that if there are in-text citations for a source there is a reference list entry, and vice versa. Bibliographies, on the other hand, contain all sources that you have used, whether they are directly cited or not. A bibliography includes sources that you have used to generate ideas or 'read around' a topic, but have not referred to directly in the body of the document.

For essays taught by LMC, you will be expected to provide only a reference list. If you have used any source in your essay assignment, you are expected to say where you have used it by citing it directly.

Reference List

Books

The details you must provide for a book are:

- ✓ Author(s) surname(s) followed by first name
- ✓ Name of the book – put the article title in italicised with sentence style capitalisation the title of the book
- ✓ Editors (if applicable)
- ✓ Location and Publisher name
- ✓ Year published

Journal articles

The details you must provide for an article are:

- ✓ Name(s) of the author(s) surname(s) followed by first name
- ✓ Title of the article in inverted commas
- ✓ Title of the journal (sometimes called a 'periodical') - *italicised* with sentence style capitalisation
- ✓ Volume number
- ✓ Issue number

- ✓ Year of publication
- ✓ Page numbers.

Newspaper articles

- ✓ Name(s) of the author(s) surname(s) followed by first name
- ✓ Title of the article in inverted commas
- ✓ Title of the of the Newspaper- *italicised* with sentence style capitalisation
- ✓ Date
- ✓ Page numbers.

Electronic sources - Websites

- ✓ Name(s) of the author(s) surname(s) followed by first name
- ✓ Name of the Website title - *italicised* with sentence style capitalisation
- ✓ [website]
- ✓ Year of site updated
- ✓ Url
- ✓ (accessed date).

7. Plagiarism

Plagiarism can be defined as **using another person's intellectual work and presenting it as your own.**

The following are examples of dishonest practices and /or plagiarism:

- a. **Copying out parts of any text without acknowledging the source(s).** This may be written text, structures within texts, diagrams, formulae, sound files, still photographs, audio-visual material, graphics/animations/multimedia objects, other computer based material, mathematical proofs, or art objects. This can be done as verbatim copying or paraphrasing.
- b. **Copying directly, acknowledging the source but not using quotation marks.** This is still plagiarism as you are not clearly distinguishing other people's ideas and words from your own.
- c. **The use of someone else's concepts,** experimental results, experimental conclusions or conclusions drawn from analysing evidence or arguments without acknowledging the originator of the idea(s) or conclusion(s).

- d. **Submitting a substantially similar final version of any material as a fellow student**, whether co-operation on a piece of work was part of the assignment instructions or not.
- e. **Falsification of results** from experiments, surveys or other research methods.
- f. **Self-plagiarism** or recycling, where substantially the same piece of work is submitted more than once for assessment.
- g. **Ghostwriting**, where another person authors an essay that is presented as the student's own.

How To Avoid Plagiarising

In all your academic work, you will be involved in reading, analysing and writing about other writer's ideas. Obviously, when you do this, you will quote these ideas, what others have said about these ideas, and YOUR analysis of these ideas.

When you do this, it is essential that you **use references** i.e. **Oxford system** to show where you have reproduced material which you have found in your research, written by others. This can also include useful material from lectures. Whether you **quote directly** from other's work, or whether you **paraphrase** their work, you **MUST** acknowledge your sources using references. You will have help to do this during the course.

What Will Happen To Me If I Plagiarise?

There are a range of penalties which will be applied if you are found to have plagiarised – from either published or unpublished material. These penalties include, but are not limited to:

- a. applying a **fail grade** to the subject;
- b. applying a **fail grade** to part or all of the assessment;
- c. **referring** the matter to the **Commandant, Defence Academy**; and
- d. placing a **record** of the alleged infringement on the student's file

PLAGIARISM IS TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY BY DEFENCE ACADEMY STAFF BECAUSE IT IS A FORM OF CHEATING. IT VIOLATES INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND UNDERMINES THE CULTURE OF INTELLECTUAL ENQUIRY WHICH IS FUNDAMENTAL TO ALL ACADEMIC WORK.

NOTE

NOTE