**Essay guidelines**

The structure of the essay is very important. This is what helps students to organize the argument, making best use of the evidence gathered. The required elements of the final work to be submitted are listed here.

- Title page
- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion
- References list

Students should use the chosen system of academic referencing (eg. Harvard) as soon as they start writing. That way, they are less likely to forget to include a citation. It is also easier than trying to add references at a later stage. Most modern word processors are helpful with this.

Some students draft the introduction paragraph first. If students do that, they must be prepared to revise it once the essay is complete.

The main task is writing the body of the essay, which should be presented in the form of a reasoned argument. The form of this varies with the subject of the essay, but as the argument develops, it should be clear to the reader what relevant evidence has been discovered, where/how it has been discovered and how it supports the argument. In most subjects, sub-headings within the main body of the essay will help the reader to understand the argument (and will also help the student to keep on track).

Once the main body of the essay is complete, it is possible to finalize the introduction (which tells the reader what to expect) and the conclusion (including any questions that have not been resolved).

The remaining stages in writing the essay take time but are not difficult. Students need to check that they have cited sources for all material that is not their own, and that the citations are complete and consistent with the chosen referencing system. The reference list should list only the sources used in the essay. The whole essay needs to be proofread carefully (computer spelling and grammar checkers are useful but will not do everything). Pages must be numbered and lines double-spaced.