1. What is the purpose of academic writing?

Students should be clear why they are writing. The most common reasons include:

1. to report on a piece of research the writer has conducted,
2. to answer a question the writer has been given or chosen,
3. to discuss a subject of common interest and give the writer’s view,
4. to synthesise research done by others on a topic,
5. to present a hypothesis for consideration by others,
6. to make notes on something read or heard or seen.
7. What are the main features of academic writing?

Academic writing strives to be accurate and has the following features: semi-formal vocabulary, lack of idioms, use of citation/references, use of both passive and active voices, precision, caution.

1. Which are the most common types of academic writing?

Notes – A written record of the main points of a text or lecture for a student’s personal use.

Report – A description of something a student has done (e.g. conducting a survey or experiment).

Project – A piece of research, either individual or group work, with the topic chosen by the student(s).

Essay – The most common type of written work, with the title given by the teacher, normally 1,000–5,000 words.

Dissertation/Thesis – The longest piece of writing normally done by a student (20,000+ words) often for a higher degree on a topic chosen by the student.

Paper – A general term for any academic essay, report, presentation or article.

1. What is the difference between short and long essay formats?

Short essays (including exam answers) generally have this pattern:

* Introduction
* Main body
* Conclusion

Longer essays and reports may include:

* Introduction
* Main body
* Literature review
* Case study
* Discussion
* Conclusion
* References
* Appendices

1. What is the general pattern for an introduction?

Introductions are usually no more than about 10% of the total length of an assignment.

This is a common structure:

a) Definition of key terms, if needed

b) Relevant background information

c) Review of work by other writers on the topic

d) Purpose or aim of the paper

e) Your research methods

f) Any limitations you imposed

g) An outline of your paper

It can be difficult to start writing an essay, but especially in exams, hesitation will waste valuable time. The first few sentences should be general but not vague in order to help the reader focus on the topic.

It is important to avoid opening sentences which are over-general and vague.

1. What is the general pattern for a conclusion?

Conclusions tend to be shorter and more varied in format than introductions. Some articles may have a ‘summary’ or ‘concluding remarks’. But student papers should generally have a final section which summarises the arguments and makes it clear to the reader that the original question has been answered.

Although there is no fixed pattern, a common structure for an essay conclusion is:

a) Summary of main findings or results

b) Link back to the original question to show it has been answered

c) Reference of the limitations of your work (e.g. geographical)

d) Suggestions for future possible related research

e) Comments on the implications of your research