

COMP150: Game Development Practices

# 6: Scholarly Writing

# Learning Outcomes

- ▶ **Compare** the key features of academic discussions **and** arguments
- ▶ **Explain how** to structure a scholarly paper
- ▶ **Use** LaTeX to **write** a scholarly paper
- ▶ **Reference** sources using BiBTeX

# Academic Discussion

In your pre-production development teams:

**Discuss** what a 'discussion' is, and what it does, in an academic context

- ▶ Discuss
- ▶ Make Notes in Slack
- ▶ 10 minutes

# Academic Discussion

The core of academic discussion is “evidence-based argument of a non-obvious position” with the following goals:

- ▶ Present new ideas and insights
- ▶ Argue that ideas and insights are likely to be true (or, at least supported by credible evidence)
- ▶ Defend the ideas and insights from likely criticisms
- ▶ Propose useful applications of the idea and/or how the idea could be further developed

# Academic Discussion

All papers should *argue* something.

Construct some sort of judgement, and then to be able to construct an effective, convincing argument to defend it. This is the essence of academic writing.

# Academic Discussion

A common criticism of student papers is that they are *descriptive* rather than *argumentative*.

- ▶ There must be evidence of original insight through analysis:
  - ▶ Compare and Contrast
  - ▶ Synthesis and Inference
- ▶ There must be a purpose to the argument:
  - ▶ Argument is centred on a question
  - ▶ The paper has a key take-away point that justifies its existence
  - ▶ The question is actually answered, and the answer defended
- ▶ Avoid describing things the reader is likely to already know

# Academic Discussion

- ▶ Relevant
- ▶ Manageable in terms of research and other practical considerations
- ▶ Specific, yet sustainable
- ▶ Original, novel, and useful
- ▶ Consistent with Requirements
- ▶ Clear and Simple
- ▶ Interesting

# Relevance

The question will be of academic and intellectual interest to people in the field you have chosen to study. The question may arise from curiosities about, or issues raised in, the literature, or queries about practice.

You should be able to establish a clear purpose for your research in relation to the chosen field. For example, are you filling a gap in knowledge, analysing academic assumptions or professional practice, monitoring a development in practice, comparing different approaches or testing theories within a specific population?



# Management

You need to be realistic about the scope and scale of the project. The question you ask must be within your ability to tackle. Can this data be accessed within the limited time and resources you have available to you?

Sometimes a research question appears feasible, but when you start your fieldwork or library study, it proves otherwise. In this situation, it is important to write up the problems honestly and to reflect on what has been learnt.

# Original

The question should not simply copy others. It should show your own imagination and your ability to construct and develop research issues.

The best insights cause pause and are derived by the author, rather than merely copied from others.

# Specific, yet Sustainable

The question should be very specific, but should be able to sustain discussion. It should show your insight into one key aspects of the field. However, it should also show your ability to construct and develop insights about that field. There needs to be sufficient scope to develop into a research project in the future.

*Depth* over **breadth**.

# Consistent with Requirements

The question must allow you the scope to satisfy the learning outcomes of the course.

For example, in this module you should conduct a theoretical study and/or literature review, one that does not contain analysis of empirical data. You should conduct an appropriate review of the academic literature and show how you have explored theory and reasoned analytically to produce new insights about the subject.

# Clarity

If you create a clear and simple research question, you may find that it becomes more complex as you think about the situation you are studying and undertake the literature review.

Having one key question with several sub-components will guide your research here.

# Interesting

The question needs to intrigue you and maintain your interest throughout the project. There are two traps to avoid:

- ▶ Some questions are *convenient* — the best you can come up with when asked to state a question or, perhaps, the question fits in with the assessment so you decide it will suffice.
- ▶ Some questions are *fads* — they arise out of a set of personal circumstances, for example a job application. Once the circumstances change you may lose interest for the topic and it becomes very tedious.

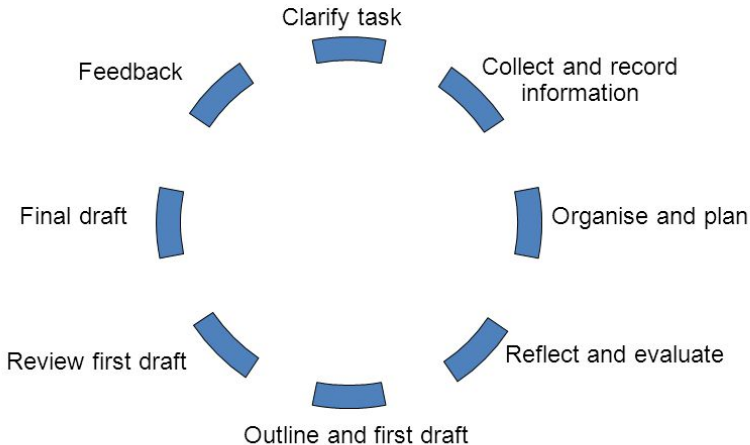
# Essay Writing

“Writing an essay does not simply happen on a particular day. Effectively, you start the writing process as soon as you begin to study the topic of your next essay.”

— Northedge 2005: 297

# Stages of essay writing

Adapted from Cottrell, S. (2008: 176-177)





# Essay Structure

- ▶ A clear structure is evident from a clear question and a focused argument
- ▶ With a constrained word count, you must focus on a very specific question
- ▶ *Depth* is needed over **breadth**:
  - ▶ There must be enough evidence to convince
  - ▶ The question must be answerable

# Essay Structure

There are many parallels between academic writing and storytelling:

- ▶ Similar rules of writing will apply (though formal)
- ▶ Beginning, middle, and end:
  - ▶ Who is the story about? Who are the characters?  
What do you need to understand to follow the story?  
What is the larger challenge that is being addressed?
  - ▶ What actions are taken to address the challenge?  
What do the characters do?
  - ▶ What have the characters accomplished? How have the characters and their world changed as a result of the action?

# Essay Structure

Schimel, J. (2012) presents an interesting overview of the structures that can be found in academic papers:

- ▶ OCAR Structure
- ▶ Opening, Challenge, Action, Resolution
- ▶ ABDCE Structure
- ▶ Action, Background, Development, Climax, Ending
- ▶ LDR Structure
- ▶ Lead, Development, Review

# Essay Structure

Focus on OCAR!

Opening

Challenge

Action

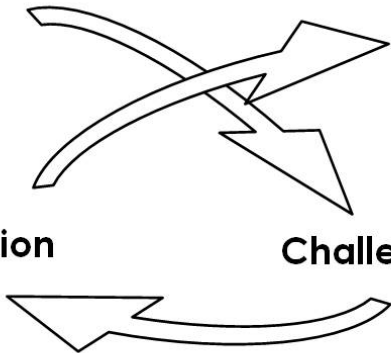
Resolution

**Opening**

**Resolution**

**Action**

**Challenge**



# Essay Structure

- ▶ Nobody uses OCAR as explicit headings in essays
- ▶ It is a general framework — use your own headings!
- ▶ It is broadly compatible with other styles of academic writing
- ▶ i.e., IMRAD as used in primary research