

## Unit 3

### Organisation in Academic Writing

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

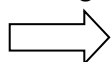
- write effective problem-solution essays
- write coherent paragraphs
- write convincing for and against essays

#### Introduction

This unit is divided into four sections providing reference and practice material for planning, structuring, writing and editing two types of academic essay.

#### Section 1

Problem-solution essays:  
structuring, planning & writing



#### Section 2

Coherence in paragraphs



#### Section 3

For and against essays:  
structuring, planning  
& writing

Referencing note: This unit uses **IEEE referencing style** for all in-text and end-of-text referencing.



In each week of this subject there are IndiWork activities on LEARN@PolyU (<https://learn.polyu.edu.hk/>). You need to do these activities as out-of-class work to successfully complete ELC1013. More information about each IndiWork activity can be found on the [IndiWork Student Guide](#) on LEARN@PolyU.

### Section 1 Problem-Solution Essays

#### Activity 1 Brainstorming

You are going to analyse a problem-solution essay on **smartphone addiction among university students**. What is the problem? Why is it a problem? With a partner, discuss the causes, effects and possible solutions to this problem and complete the following table. Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

| Causes of smartphone addiction among university students | Effects of smartphone addiction on university students | Possible solutions to the problem |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
|  |  |                                   |

**Activity 2      Reading**

*Read the following problem-solution essay. Which of your ideas in Activity 1 are mentioned? Add any new ideas from the essay to your table in Activity 1.*

**Discuss the effects of smartphone addiction on university students and suggest solutions for the problem.**

Smartphones have grown to be an integral part of the lives of many university students, and some students have started to become addicted to this communication device. Smartphone addiction could impact strongly on students' mental well-being and academic achievements. To eliminate this problem, determined efforts by educators and policy makers are needed.

Smartphone addiction may have serious consequences for students' mental health. Smartphones are used by college students for various purposes and when used appropriately, they can help these students to be more efficient in their studies and also to maintain their mental well-being. However, studies (e.g. [1], [2]) have shown that many university students have become obsessive users of mobile phones. Some of them are so addicted that they need to constantly check their phones for new messages on social media. As revealed in Smith et al.'s [3] study, many students place their phones on the table to facilitate their compulsive checking of new messages when attending lectures. When receiving few messages or obtaining a low number of "likes" for the updates or photos they post, some of them become anxious and even depressed, which could eventually lead to low self-esteem and in some cases social withdrawal. Social withdrawal is particularly serious among shy and lonely students [4].

Another impact of smartphone addiction is a potential decline in academic performance. This decline is caused by two main factors. The first one is that students who are addicted to smartphones are prone to multitasking, i.e. managing a variety of tasks at the same time. This often makes them less able to fully concentrate on their academic work. A number of studies (see [5], [6]) demonstrate that using social networking sites while completing assignments or attending lectures is negatively associated with university GPAs (Grade Point Average). In other words, the more time students spend on their smartphones, the lower their GPAs. The other factor is that compulsive smartphone users tend to delay bedtimes in order to extend their time on social networks, which can cause sleep deprivation. An additional cause of sleep problems, as identified by Demirci et al. [7], is the light emission from smartphone screens before bedtime, which could result in sleep disturbance and even insomnia. This decreased sleep quality may result in fatigue and daytime dysfunction, which could directly affect students' comprehension and critical thinking abilities. It is, therefore, likely that long-term sleep deprivation and poor sleep quality will result in a decreased academic performance.

To address the problems caused by compulsive smartphone use, educators and policy makers should collaborate to design and implement intervention programmes. Universities are on the front line of this battle. They should take proactive measures to identify students who are already addicted and at risk of addiction to smartphones. Detailed guidelines are needed for lecturers, programme leaders and student assistance

counsellors so that as soon as a case is identified, these staff members know whom to report the case to and how to follow up. Special attention should be paid to vulnerable students, i.e. those who often look unusually tired, inactive and lonely in class because “shyness and loneliness”, according to Bian and Leung [4], can be an indicator of smartphone addiction. Since physically active and communicative students are less likely to become smartphone addicts [2], universities should extend their intervention programmes to the management of student stress levels. One way to achieve this goal is to regularly examine student workload, in particular, assessment load so that students have more time for physical and other face-to-face activities.

Obsessive smartphone use has negatively affected the mental health and academic achievements of many students. Alleviating the problem will require a conscious joint effort on the part of educators, policy makers and students themselves. Only if all stakeholders work together can this problem be fully acknowledged and properly addressed.

## References

- [1] M. Samaha and N. S. Hawi, “Relationships among smartphone addiction, stress, academic performance, and satisfaction with life,” *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 57, pp. 321-325, 2016.
- [2] J. L. Wang, H. Z. Wang, J. Gaskin, and L. H. Wang, “The role of stress and motivation in problematic smartphone use among college students,” *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 53, pp. 181-188, 2015.
- [3] A. C. Smith, P. A. King, I. Ozer, J. Mellott, P. Jarvis, and P. L. Judd, “An investigation into multitasking and academic performance,” *Social Networking and Human Behavior*, vol. 49, pp. 181-188, 2014.
- [4] M. Bian and L. Leung, “Linking loneliness, shyness, smartphone addiction symptoms, and patterns of smartphone use to social capital,” *Social Science Computer Review*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 61-79, 2015, p. 73.
- [5] R. Junco and S. R. Cotton, “No A 4 U: The relationship between multitasking and academic performance,” *Computers & Education*, vol. 59, pp. 505-514, 2012.
- [6] L. D. Rosen, L. M. Carrier, and N. A. Cheever, “Facebook and texting made me do it: Media-induced task-switching while studying,” *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 948-958, 2013.
- [7] K. Demirci, M. Akgönül, and A. Akpınar, “Relationship of smartphone use severity with sleep quality, depression, and anxiety in university students,” *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 85-92, 2015.

**Activity 3a      Structure**

*How has the writer structured the essay? Write the purpose / function of each paragraph below and any supporting evidence cited. Are the citations integral or non-integral?*

| Paragraph number | Purpose / Function | Supporting evidence | Integral or non-integral citation? |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1                |                    |                     |                                    |
| 2                |                    |                     |                                    |
| 3                |                    |                     |                                    |
| 4                |                    |                     |                                    |
| 5                |                    |                     |                                    |

**Activity 3b      Alternative structures**

*Can you suggest alternative structures for writing problem-solution essays?*

**Activity 4      Academic style**

*Writing in an academic style involves, amongst others, the use of formal vocabulary, hedging your claims and knowing how to weave sources into your writing. To help you identify some examples of these features, find the following words or phrases in the essay above.*

1. A formal synonym in the introduction for 'essential'.
2. A formal synonym in the introduction for 'to get rid of'.
3. Two modal verbs used to hedge claims in the first 2 paragraphs.

4. Two hedging devices in the second paragraph to show that the claims are not being made about all people.
5. A formal synonym for 'make possible' in the second paragraph.
6. A formal synonym for 'to tackle' in the third paragraph.
7. A formal synonym in the conclusion for 'making less serious'.
8. A *verb + adjective* combination and a *verb* (not a modal verb) in the third paragraph which are used to hedge claims.
9. Three phrases in the essay used to incorporate integral citations into a sentence.
10. Two reporting verbs in the essay.

### Writing an Introduction

Each sentence of an introduction should fulfil a function and supply the reader with information regarding essay type, scope, structure and content. An introduction needs to tell the reader:

**What** the issue is about – this is the most important part in the introductory paragraph. It tells your reader what is to be discussed in the essay. This part normally contains only one sentence, which is also called the thesis statement. Your thesis statement should be presented objectively.

*Compare the following two thesis statements. What are the differences?*

- 'Smartphone addiction impacts students.'
- 'Smartphone addiction could impact strongly on students' mental well-being and academic achievements.'

**Why** the issue is important – put the question into context and identify the main issues that are raised by the question, including background information on the topic. Be careful not to write too much.

**How** you are going to discuss the issue – let the reader know what you are going to cover in your essay in order to answer the question. This is also called an overview or outline of an essay. For short essays, only a short overview is needed.

*In a problem-solution essay, the overview is often not explicitly stated, but instead combined with the **What** and **Why** functions, as you can see from the example below.*

Smartphones have grown to be an integral part of the lives of many university students, and some students have started to become addicted to this communication device. Smartphone addiction could impact strongly on students' mental well-being and academic achievements. To eliminate this problem, determined efforts by educators and policy makers are needed.

## Definitions

For some of your university assignments, you may need to provide definitions. A formal definition is based upon a concise, logical pattern that includes as much information as it can within a minimum amount of space. The primary reason to include definitions in your writing is to avoid any misunderstanding by your reader. A formal definition consists of three parts.

1. The term (word or phrase) to be defined
2. The class of object or concept to which the term belongs
3. The differentiating characteristics that distinguish it from all others of its class

For example:

- An essay (*term*) is a piece of writing (*class*) which is often written from an author's point of view (*differentiating characteristics*).
- Computer science (*term*) is a subject (*class*) involving the design, assembly, programming and use of computers (*differentiating characteristics*).
- Veterinary nursing (*term*) is a branch of science (*class*) that deals with the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease in non-human animals (*differentiating characteristics*).

Although these examples should illustrate the manner in which the three parts work together, they are not particularly realistic. Most readers will already be quite familiar with the concepts of an essay, computer science and veterinary nursing. For this reason, it is important to know when and why you should include definitions in your writing. We write a definition when we need to describe:

- an important word the readers might not understand:  

'Stellar wobble is a variation in the position of a star due to the gravitational influence of another body orbiting it...'
- a commonly used word or phrase which has several different meanings:  

'Throughout this essay, the term computer games will refer to all types of computer games including video games, online games and games played on mobile devices.'

## Writing a body section

There are two basic types of problem-solution essay.

1. Cause-effect-solution
2. Impact-solution

Which type of essay was presented in Activity 2?

## Topic sentences

A well-organised paragraph supports or develops a single controlling idea, expressed in a sentence called the **topic sentence**. The functions of a topic sentence include:

- substantiating or supporting an essay's thesis statement (the **What** part of the introduction)
- unifying the content of a paragraph and directing the order of the sentences
- advising the reader of the subject to be discussed and how the paragraph will discuss it

Look at this example from a draft of the essay written for Activity 2. The writer's original topic sentence is underlined.

A number of problems with mental health have been observed recently among students. Smartphones are used by college students for various purposes and when used appropriately, they can help these students to be more efficient in their studies and also to maintain their mental well-being. However, studies (e.g. [1], [2]) have shown that many university students have become obsessive users of mobile phones. Some of them are so addicted that they need to constantly check their phones for new messages on social media. As revealed in Smith et al.'s [3] study, many students place their phones on the table to facilitate their compulsive checking of new messages when attending lectures. When receiving few messages or obtaining a low number of "likes" for the updates or photos they post, some of them become anxious and even depressed, which could eventually lead to low self-esteem and in some cases social withdrawal. Social withdrawal is particularly serious among shy and lonely students [4].

Is the topic sentence effective? Ask the same question for the revised topic sentences below:

1. Some worrying behaviours among students are attributable to smartphone addiction.
2. Smartphone addiction may have a serious impact on students' mental well-being.
3. Smartphone addiction may undermine students' concentration.

**Activity 5      Evaluating topic sentences**

*The three paragraphs below are extracted from a problem-solution essay on China's ageing population. However, among the three highlighted topic sentences, only one is effective.*

*Identify the effective one and explain why it is so. Revise the two that are ineffective.*

**Paragraph A**

The causes of the ageing population in China can be traced back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the government encouraged families to have more children and these children are now becoming a major sector of the senior population. This situation has recently triggered a surge in the demand for services by the elderly, such as homes and health centres for the aged. In the mid-1970s, the government began to realise the potential serious impact the policy was having on society and in 1979 decided to adopt a completely different policy: the family planning policy. This policy required that each married couple have only one child. Its implementation has dramatically reduced the birth-rate of subsequent generations and could cause a significant labour shortage in the near future.

**Paragraph B**

In addition to the population policies, the changing attitude towards family life among young Chinese couples is another factor contributing to this problem. Due to a rise in the cost of living and education expenses, many couples choose to maintain their high standard of living by not having children. It is observed that such behaviour has resulted in an increasing number of DINK (double income, no kid) couples. The rising number of DINK couples has further reduced the birth-rate in China and is pushing China towards a population imbalance in which there are relatively fewer workers to fund government initiatives.

**Paragraph C**

The labour shortage problem has worsened, so different strategies to tackle it are called for. In the short term, the government could consider extending the retirement age to encourage healthy people over 60 years of age to remain in the workforce. This could help to maintain the existing labour pool. In the long term, government policies such as offering tax breaks to reduce the costs of parenthood are necessary to encourage young couples to have children. This strategy can offset the population imbalance and increase productive labour available for the country in the future.



**Activity 6      Analysing a well-developed body paragraph**

*Re-read the body paragraph below from the essay in Activity 2 and answer the questions below.*

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Another impact of smartphone addiction is a potential decline in academic performance. This decline is caused by two main factors. The first one is that students who are addicted to smartphones are prone to multitasking, i.e. managing a variety of tasks at the same time. This often makes them less able to fully concentrate on their academic work. A   |
| 5  | number of studies (see [5], [6]) demonstrate that using social networking sites while completing assignments or attending lectures is negatively associated with university GPAs (Grade Point Average). In other words, the more time students spend on their smartphones, the lower their GPAs. The other factor is that compulsive smartphone users  |
| 10 | tend to delay bedtimes in order to extend their time on social networks, which can cause sleep deprivation. An additional cause of sleep problems, as identified by Demirci et al. [7], is the light emission from smartphone screens before bedtime, which could result in sleep disturbance and even insomnia. This decreased sleep quality may result in fatigue and daytime dysfunction, which could directly affect students' comprehension and critical thinking abilities. It is, therefore, likely that long-term sleep deprivation and poor sleep |
| 15 | quality will result in a decreased academic performance.   |

1. According to the topic sentence, what is the problem to be discussed in this paragraph? Write no more than four words.
2. How does the writer remind readers that the problem has two causes? Highlight the language used to serve this purpose.
3. Does the writer cite supporting sources when discussing the two causes? If so, are both causes well supported?
4. Apart from citing supporting sources, what does the writer do when discussing the two causes?
5. Do the two causes receive equal emphasis?

**Using sources to write paragraphs**

In order to be convincing and objective, your arguments need to be supported with evidence.

**Activity 7      Using sources**

*The following paragraph (Text A) is from a problem-solution essay on the topic of China's ageing population. Match the information cited in this essay paragraph with the two original sources below it (Texts B and C).*

*Discuss the essay writer's selection of information from Texts B and C. Why was certain information used while other information was excluded?*

**Text A: An essay paragraph**

A major cause of this problem is the government's inconsistency in its population policies since 1949. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the government encouraged families to have more children and these children are now becoming a major sector of the senior population [1]. This situation has recently triggered a surge in the demand for services by the elderly, such as homes and health centres for the aged. In the mid-1970s, the government began to realise the potential serious impact the policy was having on society and in 1979 decided to adopt a completely different policy: the family planning policy [2]. This policy required that each married couple have only one child. Its implementation has dramatically reduced the birth-rate of subsequent generations and could cause a significant labour shortage in the near future.

**Text B: Source 1**

Rapid population growth is an unforgiving taskmaster. Even with the one child policy - as a result of the high birth rate a generation before - China still has one million more births than deaths every five weeks. The Chinese State Council launched the policy in 1979, 'so the rate of population growth may be brought under control as soon as possible'. However, the root cause of the policy lay back in the 1960s with Mao Zedong's belief that 'the more people, the stronger we are' - an ideology that prevented China from developing the highly successful voluntary family planning programmes that countries such as South Korea and Taiwan had put in place in the 1960s.

M. Potts, "China's one child policy," *BMJ*, vol. 333, pp. 371, 2006.

**Text C: Source 2**

Announced in an open letter in 1979, the original [family planning] policy intended to curb expansion of the population and thereby relieve the pressure it was thought to put on economic growth. The duration believed necessary to achieve this objective was 30 years. 'When the particularly urgent issue of population growth is alleviated, we might adopt a different fertility policy', the letter read. China has since transitioned to a very low fertility rate, although much of the decline actually occurred before the implementation of fertility restrictions in 1979. The average number of children born to a Chinese woman during her lifetime had already decreased from 5.8 in 1970 to 2.7 in 1978, and continued to decline after the restrictions were implemented.

T. Alcorn and B. Bao, "China's fertility policy persists, despite debate," *The Lancet*, vol. 378, pp. 1539-1540.

## Describing causes and effects

It is important to clearly define and describe the problem(s) to be investigated. In order to recommend viable solutions for these problems, their probable causes need to be researched and explained. To highlight the seriousness of the problems, and hence the necessity and value of investigating and writing about them, the effects of the problem also require description.

To achieve an appropriate academic writing style, it is important to use a range of vocabulary. Consider the following sentences.

The student overslept because he had not set his alarm.

Or As he had not set his alarm, the student overslept.

The student overslept, causing him to miss the assessment.

Or The student missed the assessment since he had overslept.

While these sentences are grammatically correct, if words such as ‘because’, ‘as’, ‘causing’ and ‘since’ were the only words used to describe causes and effects, the essay would not have an effective academic style. Activity 8 below highlights vocabulary items that you can use instead of those words.

### Activity 8a Vocabulary for causes and effects

*The passage below includes some cause-effect language. Skim through the passage and underline the words and phrases that express causes, reasons and effects.*

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 5  | Hong Kong's transformation from a colonial backwater into a vibrant international city in the past fifty years has been accompanied by many problems. Perhaps the most serious challenge is that of overcrowding. Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated places in the world as over seven million people live and work in an area of just over 1,000 square kilometres. The high population density stems from the uneven distribution of the population, with the majority of the people living in areas with the highest concentration of jobs and investment, Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. The outcome of this inequality in population distribution is that 80% of the population live on 8% of the land area. The results of overcrowding can be seen on Hong Kong's streets. Pollution is a tangible |
| 10 | consequence of a high population density. This includes air, land, water and noise pollution. Additionally, with land at a premium in the metro area, people have little choice but to pay high rents for relatively small apartments. Cramped living conditions have also contributed to hygiene problems and sparked major health crises such as Avian Flu, SARS and COVID-19 by making the transmission of viruses difficult to track and control. The  |
| 15 | shortage of land has triggered such measures as land reclamation around Victoria Harbour, which has provoked considerable public debate in recent years. The cumulative effect of overcrowding is excessive stress on both the people and the environment of Hong Kong.  |

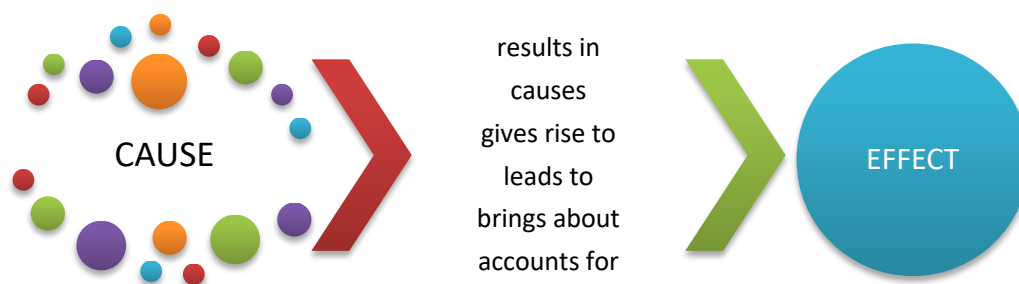
### Activity 8b Using cause and effect language

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below using cause and effect vocabulary from the text in Activity 8a. Your sentences should be formal in register. Use the preposition following the blanks to guide you.

1. The government's inconsistency in its population policies since 1949 \_\_\_\_\_ to China's ageing population problem.
2. The ageing population problem partially \_\_\_\_\_ from the government's inconsistent population policies.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ of the inconsistent population policies is the ageing population.
4. One of the major \_\_\_\_\_ of the inconsistent population policies is evident in the ageing population problem.
5. The ageing population problem is a likely \_\_\_\_\_ of the inconsistent population policies.

### Sentence patterns for causes and effects

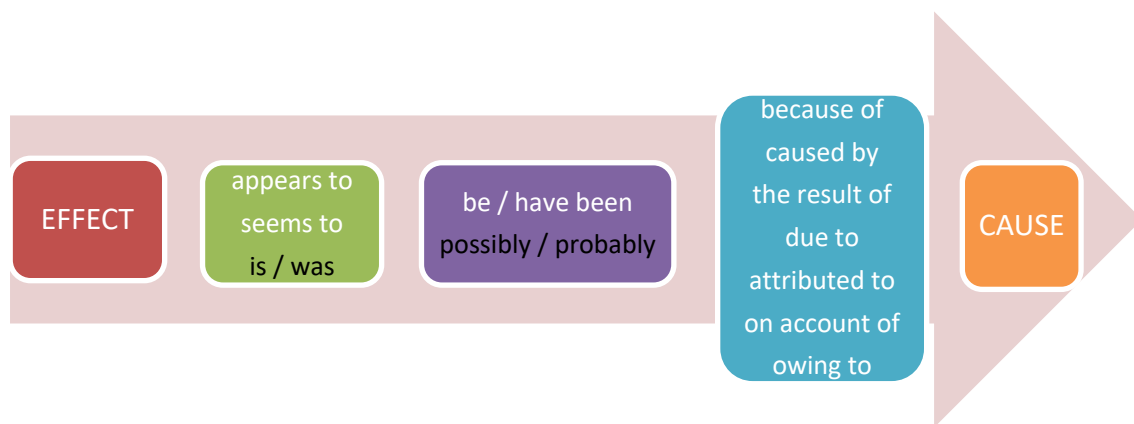
Cause-and-effect is a common method of organising and discussing ideas in expository and persuasive writing. Cause and effect could be written in the following ways:



### Sample sentences emphasising the cause

High population density may give rise to noise pollution.

The high population density could have contributed to the noise pollution in the area.



### Sample sentences emphasising the effect

Noise pollution seems to be caused by the high population density in the area.

Noise pollution is one of the major consequences of the high population density in the area.

### Activity 9 Writing cause and effect sentences

*Reorder the words to form sentences using different cause and effect vocabulary and sentence structures.*

1. and housing policies / property prices / from owning their own homes / The shortage of / along with land / has resulted in / land in Hong Kong / which prevent many

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2. as some property owners / a proliferation of subdivided flats / low-cost housing / The lack of / move to / profit from the situation / has triggered

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3. under flyovers / in the city / One outcome of / with some people / is rising levels / of homelessness / forced to sleep / and in underpasses / in the property market / the imbalance

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## Suggesting solutions

Solutions must clearly connect with the specific problems that have been discussed. The solutions and their implementation need to be clearly described, as do their probable effects. The feasibility of solutions also needs to be analysed. Are they practical and cost-effective? What resources are needed? What kind of timescale is required for success?

### Activity 10 Writing a solution paragraph

*With a partner, re-read the solution paragraph below from the essay in Activity 2 and answer the questions.*

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | To address the problems caused by compulsive smartphone use, educators and policy makers should collaborate to design and implement intervention programmes. Universities are on the front line of this battle. They should take proactive measures to identify students who are already addicted and at risk of addiction to smartphones.   |
| 5  | Detailed guidelines are needed for lecturers, programme leaders and student assistance counsellors so that as soon as a case is identified, these staff members know whom to report the case to and how to follow up. Special attention should be paid to vulnerable students, i.e. those who often look unusually tired, inactive and lonely in class because “shyness and loneliness”, according to Bian and Leung [4], can be an indicator of smartphone addiction. Since physically active and communicative students are less likely to become smartphone addicts [2], universities should extend their intervention programmes to the management of student stress levels. One way to achieve this goal is to regularly examine student workload, in particular, assessment load so that students have more time for physical and other face-to-face activities. |
| 10 |  |

1. In the paragraph above, highlight the language used to connect problems with solutions **and** the language used to introduce solutions.
2. Discuss the different language choices the writer has made to introduce the solutions and what effect these choices have on the reader.
3. Below is a list of possible moves of a solution paragraph. Are all these moves implemented in the solution paragraph above? If not, discuss with a partner how you can add the remaining moves to this solution paragraph.
  - a. Connect to the impacts presented earlier in the essay
  - b. State the general solution
  - c. Provide detailed explanation or analysis of the solution
  - d. Cite supporting sources
  - e. Explain how and by whom each specific solution can be implemented
  - f. Stress the usefulness of the solution

**Writing a conclusion**

The functions of a conclusion in a problem-solution essay can include:

- Briefly summarising the main body (problems and solutions)
- Calling for action

A conclusion in a problem-solution essay is usually brief. It should not contain any new information, or any references.

**Activity 11      Analysing a conclusion**

*What are the functions of the different sentences in the following conclusion?*

Obsessive smartphone use has negatively affected the mental health and academic achievements of many students. Alleviating the problem will require a conscious joint effort on the part of educators, policy makers and students themselves. Only if all stakeholders work together can this problem be fully acknowledged and properly addressed.

**In the following activities, you will plan and write a problem-solution essay based on several extracts from academic sources. The topic of the essay is the wealth gap in Hong Kong.**

### **Activity 12      Brainstorming vocabulary**

*Later in this section, you will practice writing a complete problem-solution essay on the topic of Hong Kong's wealth gap. To prepare you for this practice, your teacher is going to present a few slides, which depict some words and phrases associated with Hong Kong's wealth gap. Take notes while viewing the slides and then work in groups to decide what words and phrases best describe each slide.*

| <b>Image</b> | <b>Vocabulary</b> |
|--------------|-------------------|
| 1            |                   |
| 2            |                   |
| 3            |                   |
| 4            |                   |

### **Activity 13      Brainstorming solutions**

*Use the ideas that you brainstormed in Activity 12 to complete the table below. List the causes and effects of the growing wealth gap. Then think of possible solutions for each of the problems you have identified.*

| <b>Causes of the problem</b> | <b>Effects of the problem</b> | <b>Possible solutions</b> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
|                              |                               |                           |
|                              |                               |                           |
|                              |                               |                           |
|                              |                               |                           |

*When you have finished brainstorming, compare your notes with another group. Can you add more points to your table?*



**Activity 14 Identifying main points from extracts**

*Now read the six extracts on various aspects of the wealth gap and see if any match your ideas.*

When you use sources in academic writing, you need to use summarising and paraphrasing skills. You are advised to summarise and paraphrase in three stages:

- 1) Note down the key ideas in each extract
- 2) Summarise these ideas
- 3) Plan how you can organise your material into paragraphs

*Now make a note of key points and relevant supporting evidence in the table below.*

| Extract | Main point(s) | Relevant supporting evidence |
|---------|---------------|------------------------------|
| A       |               |                              |
| B       |               |                              |
| C       |               |                              |
| D       |               |                              |
| E       |               |                              |
| F       |               |                              |

**Extract A**

Obtaining a university education in Hong Kong is a considerable challenge for people from low-income households. In 2014/2015 almost half (48.2 %) of the young people enrolled in university were from the wealthiest 10% of families, and only 7% from families living below the poverty line. This is in contrast to enrolment in sub-degree programmes, which have been shown to lead to lower wages after graduation. In 2013, 30% of these students came from families living below the poverty line. Places in publicly-funded universities are extremely limited and consequently, students from well-off families who have been able to invest in after-school tuition and extra-curricular activities are more likely to be successful in their applications. A further factor to consider is that students from economically disadvantaged households are less likely to be able to afford to further their studies abroad if they cannot obtain a local university place. **[from page 86]**

S. Smith, B. Woodward, G. Martin, J. Sylvester, K. Larson, and W. Stone, "Access to tertiary education in Hong Kong: A study of barriers," *Asian Journal of Social and Economic Well-being*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 84-97, 2016.

**Extract B**

One component of the reform of the Hong Kong education system has been the adoption of new learning and teaching approaches. While these are in many ways an improvement on the more traditional transmission style which Hong Kong teachers have historically favoured, their use is potentially problematic for Hong Kong's students from poor backgrounds. For example, the focus on life-wide learning, which involves experiential learning in authentic contexts, contributes towards developing the student as a person beyond the confines of the classroom. However, its adoption may pose significant challenges to families who do not have the financial resources it necessitates. For children who do not have easy access to the internet, who cannot afford school and class trips to historical monuments or museums, or who cannot pay for the range of extra-mural activities such learning requires, education becomes less accessible. In this way, the education system serves to widen the gap between the wealthy in the city and those who are struggling to make a living. [from page 77]

F. Durcan, L. Crayon, B. Lawful, S. Chabot, and K. Lee, *Education policy in Hong Kong in the twenty-first century*. Hong Kong: Universal Publishers, 2016.

**Extract C**

Hong Kong's welfare system fails to address the growing wealth gap. This is evident in three aspects of the tax and social welfare systems, which are not structured to achieve a redistribution of wealth and a reduction in inequality. First, salary tax is extremely low compared to other countries, with the highest earners paying only 17% compared with 40-45% in countries such as the US and the UK. Second, tax policies which serve to redistribute income, for example, by taxing inheritance and capital gains, are not in place. Such policies are well-established in other countries. With regards to social welfare expenditure, Hong Kong does not provide unemployment benefits or retirement security schemes (except for public servants). Third, the scope of the social security system (the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme) is much smaller than most Western countries. This is significant because the ratio of a government's social welfare expenditure to GDP is negatively correlated with income inequality. In other words, the more the government spends on social welfare, the less unequal the overall income distribution is. [from page 32]

L. Jones and D. Grace, "Wealth distribution in Hong Kong," *Journal of Economic Development*, vol. 56, no. 3, pp. 26-37, 2017.

**Extract D**

An increase in resentment can be seen across Asian countries, where a feeling of what the Chinese call 'chou fu', or hating the rich, pervades. A survey of more than 1,000 people in China found that 96% of respondents expressed resentment towards the rich. The poor are also frustrated that their seemingly feckless governments have forgotten them. With pervasive inequality throughout the world, such resentment from the poor can quickly escalate into social unrest. In several Asian countries, specifically China and India, discontent has led to protests against food costs, property prices and high inflation. Tens of thousands of Indian protesters took to the streets in New Delhi in

February 2011 against the high food prices which have primarily affected the country's low-income population. Demonstrations in Shanghai turned violent in April 2011 when thousands of truck drivers smashed windows around the port in protest against low wages and increased fuel prices. [from page 30]

J. Bernstein and B. Melville, *Social and political trends in Asia*, Singapore: Wiley, 2014, p. 30.

#### Extract E

The apparent equitable access to high quality education in Hong Kong is undermined in several ways. For example, while public education is free for all students, with parents generally paying no more than about 500 dollars in various charges, private education is prohibitively expensive for the average Hong Kong family. Some private schools are partially subsidised by the government, which means that taxes are being used to subsidise a higher quality education for the wealthy. It is vital that this issue be addressed. The government can require schools to cap fees, provide scholarships to low-income students accepted to these schools, and gradually reduce the subsidies to the schools over a negotiated period of time. Another area which needs to be addressed is the rise of the shadow education sector. Competition for limited university places and peer pressure leave many families feeling forced to pay for additional tuition classes after school. Students who cannot afford these classes are left further disadvantaged in mainstream education. The government should regulate this industry in the short term and address its root causes in the longer term. [from page 197]

L. Beecher and R. Lowe, "Improving access to education in Hong Kong," *Journal of Education*, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 190-203, 2019.

#### Extract F

To reduce the wealth gap in countries across the region, a range of policy approaches are needed. The first is related to employment, which is the basis for secure livelihoods. Unemployment and poverty are closely linked and high levels of poverty can be alleviated through new, government-backed employment opportunities. The second is to further develop social security systems so that they meet the needs of the economically disadvantaged. This is an important measure to redistribute social resources and thus reduce the wealth gap. Thirdly, tax systems need to be transformed so that they serve the long-term goal of wealth redistribution. Finally, education systems need to be strengthened. Previous research has confirmed a relationship between education levels and the wealth gap. Only through commitment on a number of policy fronts can governments contribute towards making their societies more equal. [from page 37]

S. Wu and M. Chan, "Pro-poor policies: evidence from successful countries," *Journal of Welfare Policy*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 34-40, 2018.

**Activity 15 Planning an essay**

*Together with a partner, plan an outline for a problem-solution essay about the wealth gap in Hong Kong. Base your essay on:*

- *your own ideas (Activities 12 & 13)*
- *information from the extracts (Activity 14)*

| Paragraph                                  | Main point(s) | Supporting evidence |
|--|---------------|---------------------|
| Introduction<br>(include thesis statement) |               |                     |
| Impact 1                                   |               |                     |
| Impact 2                                   |               |                     |
| Solution 1                                 |               |                     |
| Solution 2                                 |               |                     |
| Conclusion                                 |               |                     |

**Activity 16 Writing problem paragraphs**

*You are going to write a problem paragraph. Your teacher will tell you which one to focus on. Your paragraph needs to:*

- *begin with a topic sentence*
- *explain or analyse the topic*
- *provide supporting evidence cited from the relevant extract(s)*

***My paragraph:***

*Now read a paragraph on a different problem. Provide the writer(s) feedback on the following:*

- 1. Is the topic sentence clearly related to the contents of the paragraph?*
- 2. Does the paragraph include evidence which has been correctly cited?*
- 3. Does the paragraph contain the writer's own ideas?*

#### **Activity 17      Writing solution paragraphs**

*Look back at your outline in Activity 15. What solutions did you note down? Write a paragraph discussing the solutions to the problem you wrote about in Activity 16. Be sure to:*

- Link your solutions paragraphs with your previous problem paragraph*
- Describe and discuss your solutions with reference to cited supporting evidence*

***My paragraph:***

*Read the solution paragraph written by another pair. Give them feedback on the following:*

- 1. Is the solution paragraph clearly linked back to the problem paragraph?*
- 2. Do the solutions presented directly address the problems in the problem paragraph?*
- 3. Is evidence used and is this correctly cited?*

### Activity 18 Writing practice

*You will now work together with someone who wrote different problem and solution paragraphs to you. Together you will write a full problem-solution essay.*

*The essay question is:*

**Discuss the impacts of Hong Kong's widening wealth gap and suggest solutions to address the problem.**

- 1. Write an introduction and make sure this includes a thesis statement.*
- 2. Put your problem and solution paragraphs together and work on linking them clearly for the reader.*
- 3. Based on the body paragraphs, write a conclusion.*

Remember the following task requirements:

You need to demonstrate your in-text referencing skills by citing at least four of the six extracts. At least one of your in-text citations should be in the form of a **direct quotation** from the extracts and the total word count for all quotations should not exceed 20 words. The other in-text citations should involve **summarising** or **paraphrasing**. Your in-text citations should include at least **three integral** references and **one non-integral** reference. You should use **IEEE** style of in-text referencing. Refer back to Unit 2 of your notes for help in this area.

### Activity 18a

*Analyse the essay your teacher has given you in terms of the assessment criteria. Make notes on each of these in the table below.*

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Content      |  |
| Organisation |  |
| Language     |  |
| Referencing  |  |

**Activity 18b**

*Now look at a different version of an essay answering the same question. Identify the problems in relation to the assessment criteria.*

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Content      |  |
| Organisation |  |
| Language     |  |
| Referencing  |  |

## Section 2 Coherence in Academic Writing

Writing is essentially a process rather than simply an 'end product'. By this we mean that the end result is never really complete and can always be revised a number of times. Your first draft will nearly always have problems in terms of organisation, and by reading and re-drafting, this aspect can be improved. The purpose of the following section is to give you help in improving the organisation of your paragraphs. Effective organisation involves having coherent paragraphs.

### Creating coherent paragraphs

Once you have your topic and are clear about which points you plan to write about in your essay, you need to make sure that you write coherent paragraphs. A paragraph is considered coherent if the sentences in the text flow smoothly and logically. There are a number of ways with which you can achieve coherence in your writing. Here are some of them:

1. Repetition of key terms
2. Use of pronouns
3. Use of summary phrases
4. Use of sentence connectors
5. Use of paragraph hooks

#### 1. Repetition of key terms

One way in which you can create a cohesive text (i.e. one that is relatively easy to read and understand, because the words 'hang together') is by repeating keywords and phrases or by using synonyms and similar words throughout the passage.

*Read the example paragraph below from a for and against essay discussing the benefits and drawbacks of chocolate. Words in **bold** highlight where repetition / substitution of 'chocolate' occurs. Those underlined relate to the idea of 'health'. Both of these terms are key elements of the topic sentence.*

**Chocolate** has been shown to improve cardiovascular\* health. **Cocoa**, from **which chocolate** is made, contains polyphenols\*. The main polyphenols present in **cocoa** have been shown to relax blood vessels and lower blood pressure [1]. When blood pressure is lowered, there is a reduced risk of health problems such as strokes and coronary heart disease. The study also found that the low consumption of **cocoa** resulted in these health benefits being significantly greater in males than in females. Therefore, the research indicates that small amounts of **chocolate** can indeed offer heart health benefits.

\*cardiovascular - relating to the heart and blood vessels

\*polyphenols - type of organic chemical

Pronoun  
'which'  
refers to  
'cocoa'

The example above also includes an example of a pronoun to improve coherence.



## 2. Pronouns

Pronouns play an important role in binding sentences together. Personal pronouns (e.g. **they**, **he**, **we**) and demonstrative pronouns (e.g. **this**, **that**, **these**, **those**) are used to refer back (and sometimes forward) to something which has been mentioned already.

A technique used by many academic writers to ensure a smooth flow between sentences is to use the demonstrative pronoun **this** and a summary phrase. Here are two examples:

In the past decade, many senior professionals in Hong Kong have complained about the low levels of English in the workplace. **This problem** prompted the government to introduce its Workplace English Campaign.

The evidence suggests that undergraduates rarely communicate with their parents or grandparents in English. **This finding** is perhaps not surprising as census data indicate that the overwhelming majority of people in Hong Kong speak Cantonese.

## 3. Summary phrases

Sometimes writers do not include a summary word or phrase (e.g. problem, finding) after **this**. Here is an example:

*In the following passages, the use of the pronoun reference is unclear. What summary word or phrase should be used? Write your answer below.*

### Text 1:

When interpreting this finding, it is worth noting that recent surveys have revealed that English is less widely known among Hong Kong people in their sixties and seventies than those in the 40-60 and 20-40 age groups. **This** largely stems from the fact that the provision of English-medium secondary education was limited in the 1940s and 1950s.

**Answer:** Instead of 'This largely stems ...', the writer could have written 'This \_\_\_\_\_ largely stems ...'.

### Text 2:

Studies of urban black children indicate that even though they begin their schooling with scholastic aptitude\* equal to whites, their lower achievement in the first year of school, considerably influenced by their teacher's expectations, sets the stage for an ever-widening difference in academic achievement that extends into high school. **This** works against many students, and, as studies have shown, a teacher's preconceptions or prejudices are sometimes hard to break [1].

\* scholastic aptitude *means ability to study successfully*

**Answer:** Instead of 'This works against many students ...', the writer could have written 'This \_\_\_\_\_ works against many students ...'.

#### 4. Sentence connectors

One way of linking ideas in your writing is to use sentence connectors such as **furthermore**, **in contrast** and **on the other hand**. If they are used correctly and sparingly, sentence connectors can enhance the readability of your texts by guiding your readers through the argument you are presenting. However, as the text below shows, students in Hong Kong tend to misuse or overuse these words, particularly those introducing additional points in an argument: **moreover**, **furthermore** and **besides**.

The passage below illustrates both the misuse and overuse of sentence connectors.

|    |  |  |    |
|----|--|--|----|
| 5  | Many students think that an academic paper and a school composition are the same, but actually there are a number of important differences. In this essay, I will discuss these differences. First, I want to look at the roles of the teacher and learner in each. I will then go on to compare and contrast the sources of information used. Finally, I will analyse the assessment criteria used in marking academic papers and school compositions.  | Source materials for school compositions come from the set textbook and from notes written by the teacher. <b>Nevertheless</b> , university students are expected to find expert sources in the library and also from the Internet. <b>Besides</b> , a university student must acknowledge their sources by giving references to the writers whose ideas they use in their assignments.  | 25 |
| 10 |  |  | 30 |
| 15 | In secondary education, the teacher provides nearly all of the material for students to base their writing on. <b>On the contrary</b> , this kind of spoon-feeding does not happen when academic assignments are set at university. University students are expected to be more independent and to search for materials to help them write assignments. <b>Moreover</b> , school teachers use the threat of punishment to put pressure on students to produce compositions within strict time limits. <b>On the other hand</b> , university teachers do not give punishments but may give an automatic failure to a late submission. | <b>Furthermore</b> , different assessment criteria are usually applied to the two types of writing. The composition written for the English teacher at school is likely to be graded according to the standard of grammar and vocabulary used, but when marking an academic paper, lecturers usually focus on content first. They expect their students to interpret the essay title correctly and include material that is relevant to the discussion. It appears that school compositions are often set to test language skills, whereas the tertiary assignment is given to develop subject knowledge and argumentation skills. | 35 |
| 20 |  |  | 40 |
|    |  |  | 45 |

Research has revealed that proficient academic writers rarely use the words highlighted above. In fact, the only sentence connectors they use with any regularity are **also**, **however** and (to a lesser extent) **therefore**. Note that these three words signal important relationships between ideas:

|                  |                                  |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Also</b>      | to introduce an additional point |
| <b>However</b>   | to introduce a contrast          |
| <b>Therefore</b> | to introduce a result            |

Although sentence connectors do have a role to play in creating cohesive text, you should be aware of the other methods that academic writers use to ensure that their writing ‘hangs together’.

## 5. Paragraph hooks

Another cohesive device that helps to improve the organisation of a text is the 'paragraph hook'. Paragraph hooks link one paragraph to the next by repeating keywords or using synonyms or phrases that refer back to the information given in the last sentence of the previous paragraph.

Look at the example from an essay about the problems caused by *anti-smoking legislation* in Hong Kong. The paragraph hooks are in **bold font**.

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 5  | <b>As well as the littering problem</b> , groups smoking on pavements can pose a physical danger to young children. Nakahara (2005) mentions that children are often at a height where they can be easily struck by smokers holding lit cigarettes. As the head of the child is often only at leg level to the adult smoker, the burning cigarette could easily harm the eye or other facial features of the child. It is suggested by Nakahara (2005) that street smoking has become more widespread since stricter smoking legislation began to be enforced. In the crowded urban parts of Hong Kong, such as in Mongkok and Causeway Bay, even if there are only a small proportion of pedestrians smoking, this would still generate a hazard to young children. |
| 10 | <b>In addition to the outdoor effects of smoking legislation</b> , those companies operating in Hong Kong with significant numbers of smokers as employees have also probably suffered. Considering the USA, Halpern ...   |

### Activity 19 Coherence

*This activity gives you the chance to identify uses of pronoun reference, word substitution, and sentence connectors. Highlight the paragraph hook, then identify and note down examples of each of the three features in the table below.*

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 5  | Hong Kong, like many other industrialised centres, is now heavily dependent on the financial services sector of the economy for its survival. Such countries are extremely vulnerable to changing market forces and fluctuations in world prices. This uncertainty may prevent them from carrying out long-term plans for improving the employment prospects and living standards of their people. Consequently, many of these countries have attempted to reduce their economic dependence on one market sector. This has been achieved through diversification, which includes the further development of the tourist industry and the expansion of a people-oriented service sector. However, there are a number of difficulties inherent in such changes. In order to determine the most appropriate course of action for Hong Kong, it would be useful to compare the experience of other similar countries. |
| 10 | The experience of Singapore in the last decade can be used as one illustration. Starting from ...   |

| Pronoun reference | Word substitution | Connectors |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
|                   |                   |            |

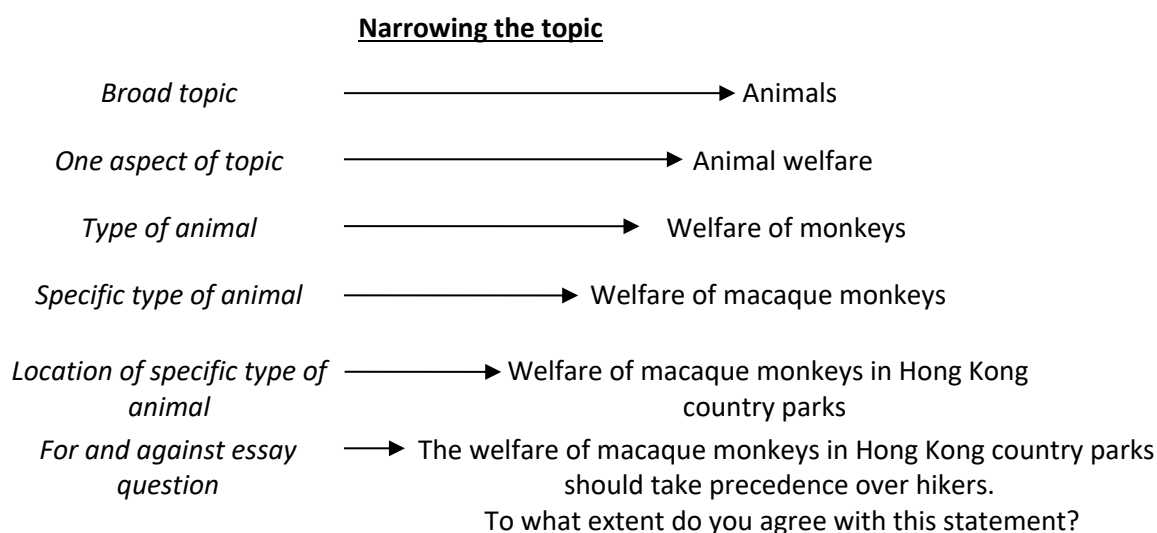
### Section 3 For and Against Essays

When writing a for and against essay, you should analyse its topic in depth and from different angles. Commonly, the topic is analysed from both its positive and negative aspects. Based on this analysis, authors commonly state their stance and may offer suggestions and recommendations.

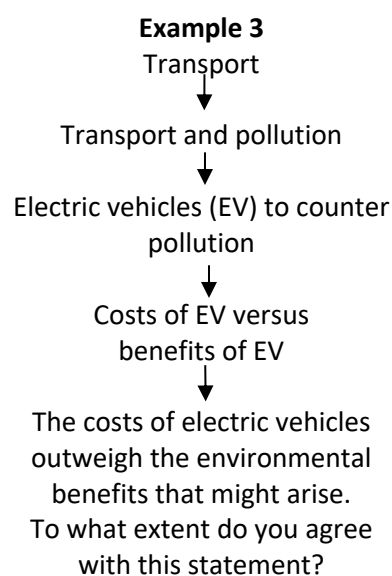
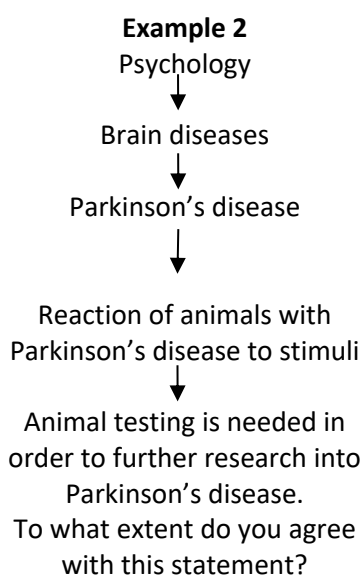
#### Choosing and narrowing a topic

It is usual at university to be given out-of-class writing assignments. Often, you are given a general topic that you then need to narrow down to a manageable focus. When choosing a topic for an academic essay, you need to ensure that the topic is narrowed down so that you can focus on a **specific aspect** of the subject that you are concerned with. Otherwise, it would be extremely difficult to write about a certain topic with enough depth and focus. If the topic is covered too generally, it reveals a lack of focus on the part of the writer.

*The following diagram is an example of narrowing down a topic for a suitable for and against essay question:*



*Here are a few more examples:*



**Activity 20      Narrowing topics**

*In groups, choose three topics from the box below and narrow them down so that they are specific enough to serve as possible topics in for and against essays.*

|                  |                     |                             |                            |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>computers</i> | <i>finance</i>      | <i>the fashion industry</i> | <i>language</i>            |
| <i>tourism</i>   | <i>construction</i> | <i>Property</i>             | <i>the design industry</i> |
| <i>music</i>     | <i>health</i>       | <i>Education</i>            | <i>land use</i>            |

***Narrowed topic 1:***

***Narrowed topic 2:***

***Narrowed topic 3:***

## Planning and brainstorming

Once you have a clear idea of your topic and have narrowed its scope to a manageable size, you should start brainstorming ideas. With a problem-solution essay, you would need to think of problems associated with the topic: their causes and effects and appropriate solutions. With a for and against essay, you need to brainstorm points from two or more sides of the issue.

### Activity 21      Brainstorming

We shall now turn our attention to *the use of new media by society* to consider the content and structure of a for and against essay.

*The use of new media has increased dramatically within society in recent years. Is this a positive or negative development? With a partner, discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the use of new media and make notes below:*

| <u>Positive effects</u> | <u>Negative effects</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                         |                         |

*Now compare your ideas with another group. How could you narrow the topic further down to a for and against essay question?*

**Activity 22**

The following activity is to help you become familiar with the vocabulary commonly used in academic essays. The words/phrases are included in Activity 23. Match the items in Column A with their definitions in Column B.

| Column A                     | Column B  |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. evident                   | a. make positive use of circumstances   |
| 2. little evidence           | b. a clear, deep understanding of a complicated problem or situation                          |
| 3. evidence suggests         | c. an over-reliance on technology and the Internet for communication and information          |
| 4. cyber culture             | d. something that is real and exactly what it appears to be                                   |
| 5. accountability            | e. a change that may happen in addition to the intended result                                |
| 6. minimise its threats      | f. to be responsible for an action or actions   |
| 7. a growing literature      | g. the qualities that make a person or thing different from others                            |
| 8. potential side effects    | h. independence or freedom to choose  |
| 9. harness its opportunities | i. a point of view  |
| 10. digital dependency       | j. social conditions resulting from the widespread use of computer networks for communication |
| 11. insight                  | k. to reduce a hostile action to the smallest degree  |
| 12. autonomy                 | l. facts/information indicating that a belief or proposition is true                          |
| 13. individuality            | m. clearly seen or understood   |
| 14. genuine                  | n. regular publication of new research  |
| 15. perspective              | o. not much proof   |

**Activity 23      Reading**

*Read the following for and against essay and see if the points presented are similar to your ideas from Activity 21.*

**Opportunities and Challenges Brought by New Media**

The surge in cyber culture and engagement in social networks through a variety of devices is one of the predominant features of the 21st century social landscape. The issue of the implications of the use of this new media has attracted rigorous debate among academics and the public alike. While some argue that new media has the potential to create a more equal society and strengthen relationships, others are less optimistic and are concerned about the increasing abuse and misunderstanding of information. This essay examines some of the advantages and disadvantages of the use of new media.

One argument in favour of new media is that it has contributed to a more egalitarian society. Relatively easy access to a public platform available to all has made it possible for many more members of society to share their ideas and express their opinions. Whereas only the views of powerful stakeholders such as government and big business could be heard previously, multiple perspectives on a multitude of issues are articulated today. Lee and Chan [1] argue that this more diverse discussion has the potential to create a better-informed society that understands the complexities of living in a world of competing interest groups. Decisions at different levels of society can then be made that represent a broader spectrum of the population.

Despite the potential for enlightenment, the opinions and information aired in new media may mislead the public. The past five years have seen a proliferation of ‘fake news’—hoaxes, propaganda and disinformation intended to deceive the public. Filmore [2] suggests that when decisions are made based on such inaccurate information, the choices that people make may not be in the best interest of society. This is especially of concern where the manipulation of the truth has been promoted for political gain. It is evident, for example, that in some countries social networking platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have been employed to discredit the reputations of political opponents [3]. As well as being divisive, the existence of fraudulent information is a threat to the very principles of an egalitarian society.

Despite these issues, a growing literature suggests that the use of new media is a strong force in connecting and bonding society. In addition to keeping existing friendships alive, cyber culture allows for the creation of relationships outside a user’s already established social network. It has been observed that expanded social networks can lead to higher levels of support and empathy among members of a community [4]. This support is not restricted to virtual empathy, either. Crowdfunding and the bringing together of volunteers and resources to combat problems are just two examples of the practical cooperation that new media is encouraging. By allowing people to connect easily, new media can facilitate positive social interaction both online and offline.

Some education specialists, however, have expressed concerns about possible over-reliance on new media. The existing cyber culture has created various levels of “digital dependency” among the public, which could lead to a decline in genuine learning [5]. Genuine learning focuses on a comprehensive understanding and critical thinking of what



40 is being learnt. The key priority of online learning, in contrast, is often to save time. This leaves little room for critical analysis to take place and thus only a superficial understanding of the learnt content can be gained. This learning attitude has given rise to the “instant noodles” culture observed by Choi and Dembski [6]. One consequence of living in such a culture is that many people might be becoming increasingly impatient, shallow and  
 45 dependent [7].

This essay has presented arguments for and against the use of new media. The benefits of new media include empowerment through the expression of diverse views and the strengthening of social connection, whilst the potential side effects encompass a distortion of knowledge and a decline in critical thinking skills. The above analysis indicates that the  
 50 advantages new media brings in connecting people together outweigh the disadvantages created by misuse of this technology. In order to reduce the negative influences of new media, governments and the public should make concerted efforts into developing strategies to detect fake news and harmful ideologies.

## References

- [1] M. Lee and G.T. Chan, "The public platform: Voices from within," *Journal of Modern Media*, vol. 12, no. 6, pp. 72–79, 2014.
- [2] E. Filmore, "Sophie's choice: The digital dilemma," *Journal of Social Science*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 34–40, 2016.
- [3] L. Byron, J.T. Wachowski, F.B. Cooper, S. Ratledge, P. D. McCarthy and G. Garner "The new age: Responsibility and repercussions in on-line messaging," *Journal of Social Media*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 15–26, 2016.
- [4] S. K. DeVito, W. Saddler, P.W. Pryce and R. Stieger, *The social animal*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2015.
- [5] B. Parker, *Literacy and learning in the 21st century*. 2nd ed., Boston MA: Price-Walters, 2015, pp. 12.
- [6] P. Choi and I. Dembski, "Transitions in learning," *Journal of Computer Science*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 14–23, 2006, pp. 16.
- [7] F. Forsythe, E. T. Warwick and L. C. Milner, "The learner and the text: Trends in learning attitudes," in *New horizons*, P. Smith and J. Bartle, Ed. London: Gateway Publishers, 2010, pp. 42-61.

**Activity 24 Essay structure**

1. *How has the writer structured the essay? In the table below, list the purpose and function of each paragraph, the supporting evidence cited, and whether the citations are integral or non-integral.*

| Paragraph number | Purpose / Function | Supporting evidence | Integral or non-integral citation? |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1                |                    |                     |                                    |
| 2                |                    |                     |                                    |
| 3                |                    |                     |                                    |
| 4                |                    |                     |                                    |
| 5                |                    |                     |                                    |
| 6                |                    |                     |                                    |

2. *Can you suggest an alternative structure for the essay? Complete the table below with two possible structures.*

| For and against essay structure (1) | For and against essay structure (2) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                                     |                                     |

3. *The writer has presented both the advantages and disadvantages of using new media. In the conclusion, however, the writer clearly believes that the benefits of new media outweigh its drawbacks. Why do you think the writer included negative views on the topic in their essay rather than concentrating solely on positive areas?*

## The functions of an introduction

As with problem-solution essays, for and against essays usually follow a **What, Why and How** pattern. See page 43 for more information.

### Activity 25 Introductions

Label the following introduction to show the **what, why and how** functions.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 5 | <p>The surge in cyber culture and engagement in social networks through a variety of devices is one of the predominant features of the 21st century social landscape. The issue of the implications of the use of this new media has attracted rigorous debate among academics and the public alike. While some argue that new media has the potential to create a more equal society and strengthen relationships, others are less optimistic and are concerned about the increasing abuse and misunderstanding of information. This essay examines some of the advantages and disadvantages of the use of new media.</p> |
|---|--|

### Activity 26 Reading body paragraphs

Read the body paragraphs of the essay on examinations below. What kind of structure does it have?

A central argument in support of examinations is that they provide motivation for students to learn. Breslawski [1], for example, finds that “extrinsic motivational methods”, such as competition between students for receiving high grades, encourage them to spend more time on studies. Without these external motivators, some students might find it challenging to stay focused, in particular on courses in which they are less interested. Exams can also be motivating because they provide a concrete goal for learning and enable students to develop a study plan [2]. During their studies, students need to organise their learning in order to prepare for end-of-course exams. Being equipped with such organisational and planning skills can help learners set practical goals and thus more effectively manage their workload. These skills should also help them in the workplace and other parts of life in the future.

Examinations, however, can affect the psychological state of candidates. Banks and Smyth [3] assert that the fear of failure could result in increased stress for many students. This is especially evident in Hong Kong where high-stakes exams exert a major impact on the direction students take in life. To meet the high expectations of the families and teachers, many students place much pressure on themselves to achieve high grades in examinations. Educational researchers also report that examination results could seriously affect the way that candidates see themselves [4], [5]. This influence on self-identity can leave a long lasting negative self-impression on students who may judge themselves to be less able than their peers.

The next consideration is the measuring function of examinations. Society needs standardised

assessments for deciding who will continue on to tertiary education and who will do particular jobs. Without standardised examinations, universities and employers could find it difficult to gauge a candidate's suitability. Exam results offer these organisations a concise and objective review of the capabilities of students [6]. This review of the strengths and weaknesses of candidates can save institutions and employers considerable time and resources during the selection process. Another important point to note is that examinations, as correctly pointed out by [7], also benefit educational institutions in measuring the effectiveness of their teaching. The information gathered from exam performance is important in informing policies and making decisions to improve learning programmes.

Despite the needed role played by examinations in measuring students' abilities, the validity of examinations has been challenged by researchers. Bond [7] and Leighton [8] argue that some high-stakes examinations may encourage students to memorise information rather than evaluate and apply what they have learnt. This is particularly the case in exams which include question types such as multiple choice. Such examinations provide little information about a candidate's higher-level thinking skills [9], [10]. If high grades are achieved at the expense of 'deep' learning, educational institutions and employers could question if the examination results represent a valid overview of a candidate's knowledge and ability.

### The functions of a conclusion

The functions of a conclusion in a balanced for and against essay can include:

- Briefly summarising the main body (advantages and disadvantages)
- Stating the author's stance or opinions
- Making suggestions and recommendations to deal with the opposing argument

### Activity 27 Conclusions

*Which of the above functions are included in the following conclusion on new media? Label the conclusion to show those functions that are used.*

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 50 | This essay has presented arguments for and against the use of new media. The benefits of new media include empowerment through the expression of diverse views and the strengthening of social connection, whilst the potential side effects encompass a distortion of knowledge and a decline in critical thinking skills. The above analysis indicates that the advantages new media brings in connecting people together outweigh the disadvantages created by misuse of this technology. In order to reduce the negative influences of new media, governments and the public should make concerted efforts into developing strategies to detect fake news and harmful ideologies. |
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**Activity 28      Writing practice**

*Read the body of the for and against essay in Activity 26. With a partner, write an appropriate **Introduction** and **Conclusion** for it.*

***My introduction:***

***My conclusion:***

