### 1. Specifications for Writing a Paragraph

This document specifies the marking criteria for the structure and content of paragraphs

A paragraph typically contains the following three components which work together to provide both internal consistency and the linkage of ideas across a text.

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| COMPONENT | FUNCTION |
| Topic sentence(s) | * To introduce and clearly state the main idea that you intend to develop in the paragraph * To alert the reader to the kind of information that the rest of the paragraph will contain |
| Development section (or body) | * To elaborate the idea that you have introduced |
| Concluding sentence(s)  (not always needed) | * To round off what you have said in your paragraph * To qualify the views expressed * To link the current paragraph to the next paragraph |

What do topic sentences do?

Topic sentences have *three crucial roles* in paragraph writing.

1. The topic sentence introduces a controlling idea. This will determine the content of the paragraph – what goes in and what is left out. You should always be able to demonstrate how every item of information in your paragraph relates to the controlling idea expressed in the topic sentence.
2. A controlling idea may take one of the following forms:

* a new idea
* a new aspect of an existing idea

1. The topic sentence links the controlling idea clearly to a preceding idea in the text.
2. Topic sentences may make these links by:

* repeating key words (or synonyms for them) from your introduction or main points in preceding paragraphs.
* using linking words or phrases such as “ another aspect of”, “a second feature of”, “in addition”

1. The topic sentence orients the reader to the content in the paragraph. It sets up the expectation that:

* all the information in the paragraph will be related to the controlling idea.
* only information related to the controlling idea will be included in the paragraph.

How to develop a paragraph

The development section (or body) of a paragraph elaborates the controlling idea expressed in the topic sentence. It can have a number of roles. Often, it fulfils all of these roles simultaneously. It may do this by:

* describing - presenting more information about the controlling idea
* exemplifying - using examples to illustrate the controlling idea
* analysing - comparing and contrasting concepts associated with the controlling idea

What do concluding sentences do?

Concluding sentences have *three crucial roles* in paragraph writing.

1. They draw together the information you have presented to elaborate your controlling idea:

* summarising the points you have made.
* repeating words or phrases (or synonyms for them) from the topic sentence
* using linking words that indicate that conclusions are being drawn, for example, *therefore, thus, resulting*

2. They often link the current paragraph to the following paragraph. They may anticipate the topic sentence of the next paragraph by:

* introducing a word/phrase or new idea which will then be picked up in the topic sentence of the next paragraph
* using words or phrases that point ahead, for example, *the following, another, other*

3. They often qualify the information or perspectives developed in the elaboration. They may qualify this information by:

* using conjunctions such as although*, even though, in spite of, despite, whereas* and *while* to foreground the importance of some perspectives and background others
* making comparisons and contrasts between perspectives

This material was adapted from Mod 3 Unit 2 of the Write Site <http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/>

An example of a good paragraph



