

ESSAYS, REPORTS, REFLECTIVE WRITING

Essays, reports and reflective journals are common forms of academic writing. They generally differ in these respects:

- purpose
- topic
- audience
- format
- style
- assessment

Purpose

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To write a well-argued response to a question or proposition, using an analysis and discussion of the relevant literature • To establish a proposition or contention (thesis) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To investigate, present and analyse information thoroughly and logically • Often to recommend action to solve a problem • Usually to make proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To record the development of your ideas and insights • To reflect on the content of the subject and on your own learning process • To analyse and discuss key issues covered by class work and/or readings

Topic

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually a question or proposition • Requires reading, sometimes fieldwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often a problem or case study based on a real or hypothetical situation • Requires reading, fieldwork or practical work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often a response to the class content, including lectures, tutorials, set readings or practical placement • May be broadly based, or focus on a particular issue or aspect covered in class

STUDY TIPS

Audience

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written for the lecturer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written for the audience established in the topic (e.g. client, manager), but in reality your lecturer is also the audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a learning experience, you're writing for yourself, although when it's assessed your lecturer is also the audience

Format

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three parts: introduction, body conclusion No headings or sub-headings* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divided into sections. Sections will vary depending on type and length of report. Uses headings and sub-headings with headings; the order is often shown by numbers or a combination of letters and numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no formal format requirements but often it is dated so that you can trace the development of your ideas and learning Frequently no headings or sub-headings, but you may choose to use sections if you wish

Style

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal English, using paragraphs and complete sentences Needs the objectivity suited to an academic study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be objective Point form is sometimes used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be subjective and informal to reflect your own thinking

Assessment

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success depends on the argument, how one point is related to the next and how well you use evidence from the literature to support your ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success depends on the demonstration of good research skills and the objective presentation and analysis of relevant information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success depends on development of your insights into the topic Your ideas may change during the course as you gain new understanding of the inter-relationships between different aspects of the content.

* Some lecturers in business and nursing require headings – see relevant guides.