

# ESSAYS, REPORTS, REFLECTIVE WRITING

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

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

Check your assignment instructions carefully as it might be a combination of different forms of writing, for example, a reflective report on your work placement.

## Purpose

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

## Topic

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually a question or proposition relating to issues, theory, ideas examined in course work</li> <li>• Requires reading, sometimes fieldwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often a problem or case study based on a real or hypothetical situation</li> <li>• Requires reading, and often includes fieldwork or practical work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often a response to the class content, including lectures, tutorials, set readings or practical placement</li> <li>• May be broadly based, or focus on a particular issue or aspect covered in class</li> <li>• Can require you to relate work placement experiences to ideas, theories and activities from uni</li> </ul>

## Audience

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written for the lecturer or tutor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written for the audience established in the topic (e.g. client, manager), but in reality your lecturer is also the audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written as if for yourself, although when it's assessed your lecturer is also the audience</li> </ul>

## Format

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three parts: introduction, body conclusion</li> <li>No headings or sub-headings (n.b. some areas, e.g. business and nursing do use headings)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Divided into sections; sections will vary depending on type and length of report</li> <li>Uses headings and sub-headings; the order is often shown by numbers or a combination of letters and numbers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Often no formal format requirements, but often dated so that you can trace the development of your ideas and learning</li> <li>Frequently no headings or sub-headings, but you may choose to use sections if you wish</li> </ul>

## Style

Essay	Report	Reflective journal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal standard English, using paragraphs and complete sentences</li> <li>Needs the objectivity suited to academic study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal standard English</li> <li>Objective to reflect academic and professional ways of communicating</li> <li>Point form is sometimes used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Might use more informal language (check lecturer's requirements)</li> <li>Can be more subjective to reflect your own thinking</li> </ul>

## Assessment

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