**Essay Writing**

* 1. **Reflection**

Use your notes from analysing the essay sample 1 before class to help you discuss in your group:

* + 1. What do you like about this essay sample? Is there anything you don’t like?
    2. What makes the main body paragraphs effective?
    3. What makes the introduction and conclusion effective?
    4. Do you think this essay demonstrates good coherence? Why/why not?
    5. What would most help you improve your essay writing skills?
  1. **Analysis**

The extracts below from essay sample 1 show the topic sentences of each body paragraph and the main thesis stated in the introduction and conclusion. Notice that you can get a good sense of the main ideas of the essay and how they are connected, by reading just these sentences of the essay.

* 1. Do you agree with the writer’s main thesis?
  2. Which colour represents the main supporting arguments?
  3. Which colour represents the counter argument?
  4. *Urbanization* is the overall context of the essay. Highlight in another colour all the expressions or collocations referencing urbanization.
  5. *Impact on health* is the overall focus of the essay. Highlight in another colour all the expressions referencing *impact on health.*
  6. What can you conclude about the relationship between the topic sentences and the thesis statement?
  7. For an academic audience, do you think the writer uses a good range of language (sentence structures and vocabulary) in these extracts?
  8. Do you think that producing a table like this one could help with your own essay planning?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Main thesis**  (in introduction) | Recent studies have shown that urban settings can also serve as a breeding ground for poverty, environmental hazards and diseases (McMichael, 2000). These have direct impacts on an individual’s health, straining the public health systems and resources. |
| **Topic sentence**  (in body paragraph 1) | Poverty has a major negative impact on the nutritional health of urban dwellers. |
| **Topic sentence**  (in body paragraph 2) | Pollution is another contributing factor to poor health in urban environments. |
| **Topic sentence**  (in body paragraph 3) | Although poverty and pollution issues inherent in urbanization bring about many health challenges, some argue that the benefits offered by education and career choices can outweigh these negative health impacts. |
| **Main thesis restated**  (in conclusion) | While the benefits that people could obtain from a better education and career prospects may mitigate the health obstacles, the outcomes may be too slow coming to help those suffering as a result of poverty and pollution in urban regions at this moment. |

* 1. **Practice**

Remember that to demonstrate good coherence, main body paragraphs tend to explain and elaborate the main idea presented in the paragraph’s topic sentence. Being able to produce effective topic sentences – that are logically elaborated in the rest of the paragraph – is important for developing your competency with coherence (CO). This is useful for any type of writing, not just essay writing.

Read academic essay sample 2 below. Notice the topic sentences from the body paragraphs are missing.

* + 1. Which topic sentence below fits the gap in body paragraph 1?

1. *The dynamism of cities enables sustainable development opportunities.*
2. *Emerging economies encourage investment from other countries.*
   * 1. Which topic sentence below fits the gap in body paragraph 2?
3. *An urban sustainable development goal (SDG) can transform the social and economic fabric of nations.*
4. *Overcrowding in cities is leading to a poor standard of living.* 
   * 1. Work with a partner to write the missing topic sentence for body paragraph 3.

|  |
| --- |
| **Academic essay sample 2**  **Introduction**  Today, half the world’s seven billion people live in cities. By 2030 for the first time ever in many parts of the world the number of rural residents will start to shrink, and by 2050, two-thirds of the world’s population will live in urban areas (“Revision of world urbanization prospects,” 2018). Urbanization will be a defining trend over the next several decades, especially in East Asia, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, where much of the world’s extreme poverty is concentrated. In the process of this urbanization, cities will play a central role in the ability of nations to achieve sustainable development.  **Body paragraph 1**  \_\_[*missing topic sentence*]\_\_. Cities are responsible for the bulk of production and consumption worldwide, and are the primary engines of economic growth and development. Roughly three-quarters of global economic activity is urban (“Urbandevelopment*,”* 2020), and as the urban population grows, so will the urban share of global GDP, and therefore the nation’s ability to invest in plans to develop. With careful planning, these investments can help develop sustainable initiatives that support both rural and urban communities in the nation.  **Body paragraph 2**  \_\_[*missing topic sentence*]\_\_. By getting urban development right, cities can create jobs, offer better livelihoods and increase economic growth (“The 17 Goals”). Well managed, sustainable initiatives and policies can also improve social inclusion, lifting the quality of life for the citizens. In this way, urban development, through effective planning and management, can accelerate progress towards reducing extreme poverty.  **Body paragraph 3**  \_\_[*missing topic sentence*]\_\_. Infrastructure investments, urban land-use systems, and layouts are cast in stone, so mistakes with these due to poor administration of SDGs may be difficult to alter for many decades. Without adequate management and investments, slums may expand, and cities may fail to generate the jobs necessary to improve livelihoods. As a result of poor management of urban planning, inequalities, exclusion, and violence are likely to increase, creating cycles of social deprivation, which exacerbate the problem. This further deepens urban inequality, and makes effective solutions even harder to find. For example, poor implementation of certain SDGs across South East Asia has arguably contributed to the rising number of slum dwellers in this region (Shafique, 2019), and solutions are not yet forthcoming. Thus, SDGs may create more harm than good if not administered properly.  **Conclusion**  Cities around the world are struggling to accommodate their rising populations and address the multidimensional challenges of urban development. If current trends continue, few countries stand to reap the benefits of sustainable urban development. The stakes are high. How the SDGs address the urban challenges and how cities promote a shift away from “business as usual” is of paramount importance to realising the benefits of urbanization.  Adapted from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2569130918-SDSN-Why-the-World-Needs-an-Urban-SDG.pdf>  **References**  Revision of world urbanization prospects. (2018). *United Nations Department of Social Affairs*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>  Shafique, T. (2019). **What sort of ‘development’ has no place for a billion slum dwellers? *The Conversation*. Retrieved from** <https://theconversation.com/what-sort-of-development-has-no-place-for-a-billion-slum-dwellers-120600>  The 17 Goals.(n.d.). *United Nations Department of Social Affairs: Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>  Urban development. (2020, April 20). *The World Bank*. Retrieved from [https://www.worldbank. org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview](https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview) |

* 1. **Looking ahead – Reminder!**

One task for your assessed portfolio is an academic essay. You should choose ONE of the following topics for this essay, and submit a draft for your essay before U3L3. Your instructor will give you feedback.

Which topic looks most interesting to you?

1. To what extent do you think that we should invest more in the design of more sustainable cities for the future?
2. Not all community environmental initiatives (e.g. recycling projects) are cost-effective. To what extent do you think that any community environmental initiatives must turn a profit or at least pay for itself?
3. Social media is causing us to interact face-to-face less with each other. To what extent do you agree or disagree?
4. Online classes are often more effective than traditional classroom instruction. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You are recommended to start researching ideas for your essay out-of-class, so that you can produce an essay with substantial (SU) and coherent (CO) ideas.