**Structure, Introductions and Conclusions**

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| By the end of this session you will:   * Have looked at a technique to analyse your question and link this to your writing. * Be able to plan and structure your writing effectively. * Looked at what elements form an effective introduction. * Looked at a sample paragraph structure. * Looked at what elements form an effective conclusion. |

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| **Lesson** | **Topics** |
| **1** | Structure, Introductions and Conclusions: how to construct complete paragraphs in academic writing. |
| **2** | Creating Complete Sentences: how to construct effective and accurate sentences, using correct clauses. |
| **3** | Cohesion and connections: how to ensure the ideas in your essay connect together. |
| **4** | Academic Punctuation: the conventions and correct use of punctuation in academic writing |
| **5** | Formality and Hedging: the correct level of formality in academic work is essential, and hedging is a vital skill to help achieve this! |
| **6** | Using Evidence Effectively: how and when to directly quote, paraphrase, summarise and synthesise the evidence you use in your assignments. |
| **7** | Writing Critically: a vital skill! How to be critical in your assignments. |
| **8** | Writing Concisely, Proofreading and Editing Tips: don’t underestimate the importance of these vital skills! This session will give you the help you need to achieve concise, error-free assignments. |

**Things you need to know about the course:**

* You will receive a certificate if you attend well.
* Some weeks, there is independent work to complete outside the class.
* The course materials are available on Moodle [here.](https://moodle.mmu.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=98810&sectionid=1033879)
* If you have queries, problems or want to submit some work for your tutor to look at, please **email**: writingproject@mmu.ac.uk

**Planning**

In order to write a well-structured piece of writing, it is important to plan. The first step to planning your writing is analysing your question. Then, it is a good idea to make a mind map (or other initial plan) around your essay question to generate ideas.

**Analysing the question:**

You can analyse your question in 5easy steps:

1. **Read** x 2
2. Identify your **command verb** (describe/analyse/evaluate/discuss/reflect/compare/outline)
3. Identify your **subject** / **topic**
4. Define **key words** or **concepts**
5. Identify the **parameters**

**Activity: Follow the 5 steps to annotate the essay question with your partner:**

‘Is it worth it?’ (Guardian, 2015). There have been ongoing discussions regarding the necessity, or otherwise, of going to university. Whilst many commentators now doubt the importance of going to university, others still find multiple benefits to attending. In light of these discussions, critically analyse the value of gaining a university degree.

**Introductions**

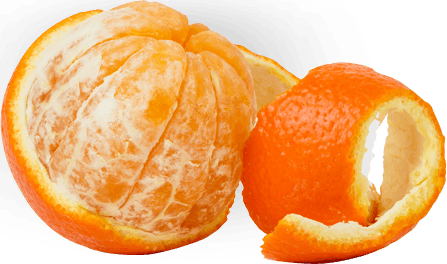
**Activity: Read the following introduction and try to find the different elements in the text.**

This essay will critically analyse the value of gaining a university degree in light of recent discussions regarding its importance and benefits. The Guardian article by Jack Stone questions the benefits of pursuing an undergraduate degree. However, this essay will argue that the award has numerous positive outcomes for both society and the individual. Analysing the value of a degree is important because the financial cost of tuition fees involves high amounts of risk to potential students. The Cambridge Dictionary (2012) defines an honours degree as ‘a first degree, based especially in a specific subject’. As degree paths differ widely internationally, this analysis will focus on degrees provided by British universities and focus predominantly on the experience of full time, home students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. In order to demonstrate the continuing importance of undergraduate degrees, this essay will examine the academic importance of learning to the individual, towards the social benefits of attending university, explore the positive impact on career prospects, and consider the good influence of degree-educated workers to the national economy.

**Organising a text around an argument**

**There is no one correct way of organising your argument. It depends on the question you are answering, your subject and your research. However, there are some general models you can use.**

* ***Perceived importance:*** Organising your argument by significance of topic to your argument.
* ***Categorical:*** Looking at different categories or classes of things.
* ***Chronological:*** Looking at an issue over a specific time period to show change or development in a theory or practice. You might organise your argument into different time periods, beginning with the earliest.
* ***Sequential:*** Writing about a process by following specific sequences of actions or sub-processes
* ***Comparative:***An assignment might ask you to examine multiple theories or issues. In this situation, you might choose to organise your writing using one of the above methods, and alternative analysis of the theories.

**Paragraph structure**

**A ‘so what?’ summary of the evidence in this paragraph. Link it to your thesis statement.**

**A topic sentence stating the point you are making.**

**Evaluate the evidence and show your agreement/disagreement. Comment on how the evidence connects to your argument. Present possible counter arguments and evaluate these, too.**

**P**

Point

**E**

Evidence

**E**

Evaluate

**L**

Link

**Provide evidence and examples from your research to support your topic sentence.**

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| **Golden Rules for Paragraphs:**   * Aim for roughly **2-3 paragraphs per page** (size 12 font, 1.5 line spaced). * **Only 1 topic per paragraph**. That does not mean that you can’t have more than one paragraph per topic! If your paragraph is extremely long, read it and try to break that topic into different aspects or foci. Then make these into separate paragraphs. * A paragraph should **never** be just one long sentence. Always try to vary your sentence type (see lesson 3). * Paragraphs should start on a **new line** and can be **indented**. * Check that every paragraph relates to your **assignment question** and **thesis statement**. |

**P**

Point

**E**

Evidence

**E**

Evaluate

**L**

Link

**Activity: Can you find the 4 elements of PEEL in the below paragraph?**

University provides the opportunity for developing social skills and extracurricular interests. Students can participate in societies, social events and volunteering. These allow students to mix with people from a range of backgrounds and cultures. The International Students' Extracurricular Experience survey (2014) showed that UK students rated their universities highest for societies and multiculturalism out of the UK, USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. In addition, the Times Higher Education survey (2016) demonstrated that UK students rated their extra-curricular opportunities 5.7 out of a possible 7 points. This illustrates that students identify social opportunities as positive aspects of the university experience in the UK. However, it could be argued that societies can be detrimental to students’ wellbeing; critics often state that social events at universities encourage binge drinking (Higgins, 2017; Goldstein, 2018). There have also been incidents of student societies conveying discriminatory and offensive messages, and inciting sexual harassment and sex crime (Egorova, 2017; Guardian, 2014). While these concerns are extremely valid, it is also important to recognise that a number of societies aim to educate and protect students from such issues. MMU, for example, is instituting a program of ‘student-led campaigning’ with the objective of ‘safeguarding and specifically tackling gendered violence’, including a training module on sexual consent (MMU, 2017:online). This emphasises the role of the union and societies in enabling students to engage in positive political action and contribute to positive social interaction on campus. The result of such interactions is improved social skills that improve self-confidence, allow students to develop strong support networks that often endure beyond university, and develop interpersonal skills that will contribute to employability.

**Conclusions**

**Activity:** **Identify each of the different elements in the conclusion.**

* **Overview of findings - Assessment of findings**
* **Recommendations - Restatement of title/thesis statement**

This essay has critically analysed the value of a university degree in light of economic change. Despite concerns regarding rising tuition fees, this investigation has demonstrated that university provides a number of significant benefits to the individual: specialist vocational skills and knowledge, socio-political awareness and engagement, and independence. These

findings are significant as they demonstrate that university provides more than just a paper qualification: university education is holistic and creates well-rounded adults. Cumulatively, these benefits for the individual profit society and the national economy by creating a diverse, socially aware, specialist workforce. Nevertheless, critics’ concerns regarding the rising cost of tuition fees and elitism at university are valid and need to be addressed with further studies and policy development. From the perspective of the government and the institution, continued efforts are necessary to ensure that a university education is accessible and a financially viable option for students from low-income backgrounds. More research is therefore necessary to determine the extent to which the rising cost of university widens economic and educational disparity between social classes.

**Analyse the question using the technique before.** **Write an introduction.**

In order to solve traffic problems, governments should tax private car owners heavily and use the money to improve public transportation. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such a solution.

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| **Organising the writing process: A step-by-step guide**   1. Analyse your question. 2. Mind map / plan possible points to cover or arguments to make. 3. Stop and think. What is **your** initial response/argument? 4. Research to find out facts, case studies, arguments, statistics. 5. Stop and reflect. Has your opinion changed? Write out your main argument to ensure you are certain of your central message. 6. Outline your main paragraphs/arguments (with bullet points and evidence). 7. Draft your introduction and/or your conclusion (some students prefer to leave this to the end). 8. Draft your body paragraphs. 9. Write a draft of your conclusion. 10. Edit and proof read. |