



ESSAY WRITING PROCESS

RES101 Academic Research & Writing
RES401 Postgraduate Research & Writing

The Phases of Essay Writing

Essay writing is not a one-step process, it involves a dynamic interaction of critical thinking, writing and editing. Key activities in this process include:



We will now look at each step in detail..

Revision of Research



- Analyse the Question.
- Apply Critical and Creative Thinking to come up your approach or idea for the assignment, what position will you take?
- Find appropriate resources.
- Start Reading to find information to support your approach and information on alternate views.



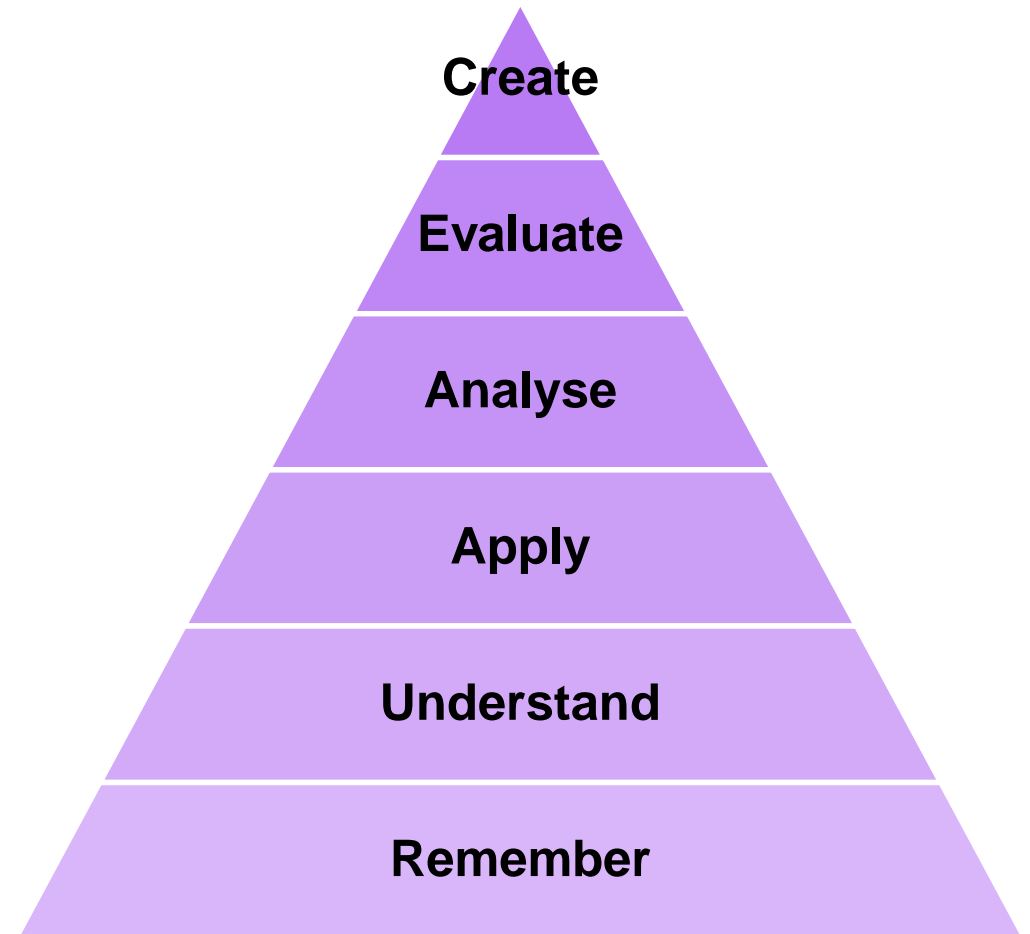
Revision - Analysing the Question



- What is the question asking you to do?
 - What are the key instructive task words and what do they mean? (e.g. compare, discuss, examine, outline etc.)
 - What are the content words, what do you have to do? (e.g. the topic area, focus of the research)
 - What are the limiting words? (e.g. words that define the scope, increase focus on an area or limit the research)
- What are the Word Count requirements?
- How many References are required?
- When is it due?

Revision – Apply Critical and Creative Thinking

- Going beyond remembering, understanding and applying.
- **Analysing** the information and data that supports your view.
- **Evaluating** its value and making critical judgements about the supporting evidence and research.
- **Synthesise** this information, bringing ideas together or **creating** new approaches or applications for this information.



Bloom's Revised Taxonomy 2001

Revision - Choosing Resources

When choosing sources for your essay, read the '**Abstract**' (the back of the book) to find out what the article is about and then read the '**Conclusions**' at the end, look for:

- Information that supports your argument.
- Provide background information on your topic.
- Investigate contrary views or alternative approaches to reduce bias in your argument.
- Have reliable statistical data and other research information to support your argument.
- Information that has been used in the same or similar context.



Revision – Developing a Reading Plan

- **Read to understand** - write out a summary in your own words that identifies the key themes (Annotated Bibliography).
- **Read to analyse** – write out the motive, audience and argument of the text, making note of the evidence to support your argument.
- **Read to evaluate** – What are your thoughts on the merit of the argument, do you agree/disagree? Make note of the value of ideas and alternative positions or approaches.
- **Read to synthesis** – what is the trajectory of their ideas, make note of improvements, problems, solutions and opportunities for further research.



Planning your Essay



‘Prepare an Outline’ of the essay. There are various methods that you can use to do this:

- Brainstorm a list of ideas in dot point form, then organise them into a framework for your essay.
- Table ideas, creating a columns for ideas and another column for supporting research and evidence.
- Mind-map ideas creating a picture of the key points and their supporting evidence.



Brainstorming

Consists of...

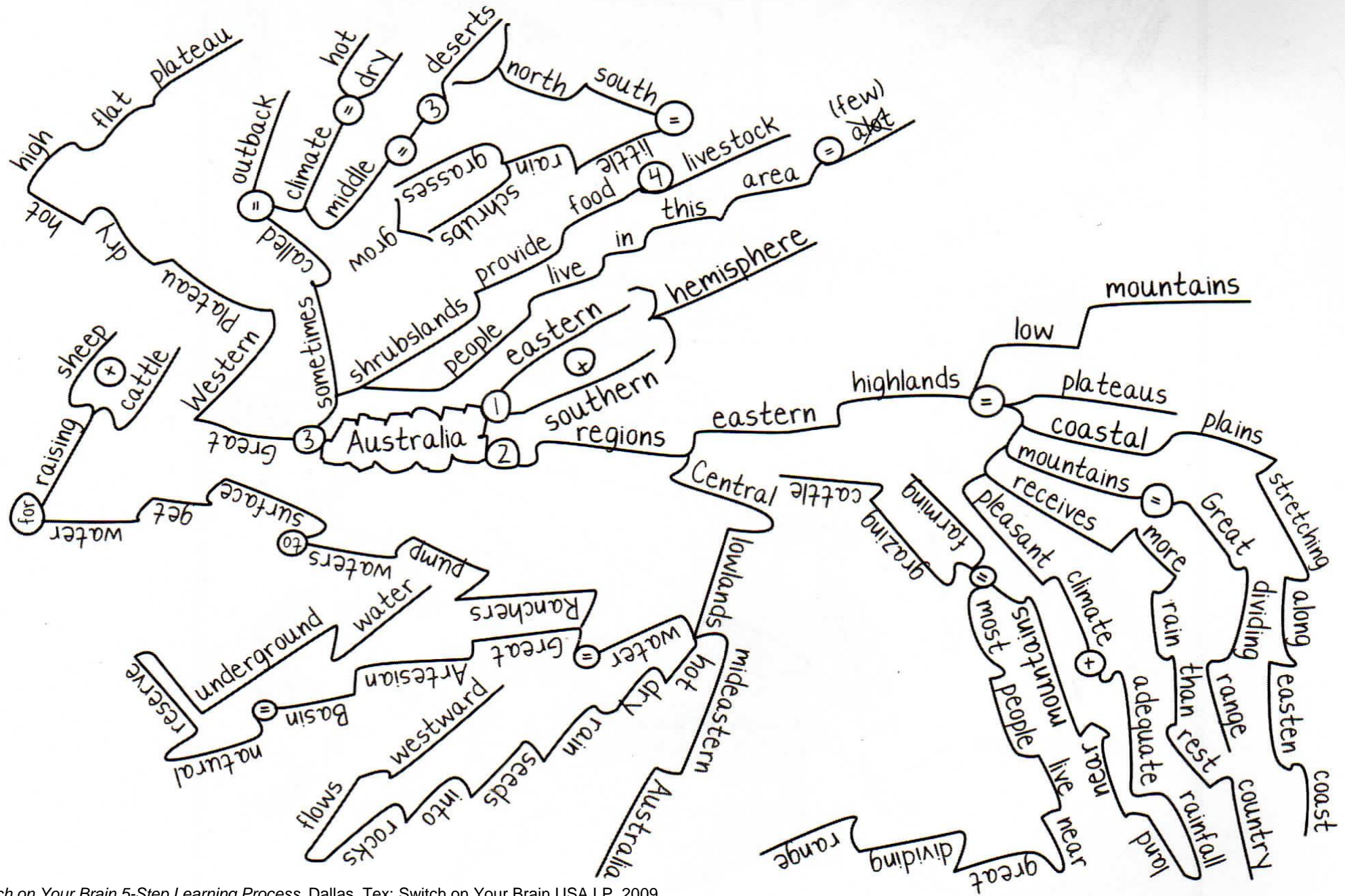
- Brainstorming: Making a list; allowing ideas to flow freely
- Clustering: Take one of the words from brainstorming, circle it in the center of a page, then connect ideas to it
- Outlining: Number the items in the cluster; then place them into outline form



Table Outline

Key Point	Research
1. Background of the concept/idea.	Book Reference 1 - Title: "Blah Blah"
2. Analyse the concept into its key components.	Book Reference 1 Ch 3 Journal 1
3. Analysis of other similar Concepts/Theories that support your argument.	Reference 2 & 3 Journal 2
4. Evaluate research that disputes or disagrees with your argument.	Reference 4 & 5

Mind-Mapping



DISCUSSION – Planning your Outline

- Which method do you think you will use?
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- Which method best suits your Learning Style?



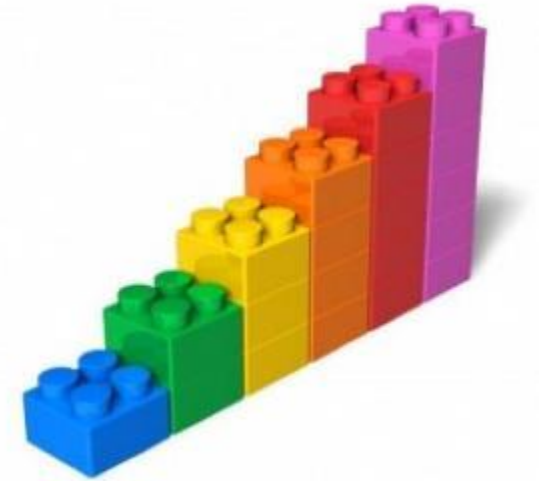
Planning – Essay with 2500 Word Count

Start by breaking down the Word Count.

A guideline would be that each paragraph is approximately 200-300 words.

Introduction	250	Words
Main Body	2000	Words
Conclusion	250	Words
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>2500</u>	<u>Words</u>

Approx 1 Paragraph
Approx 7-10 Paragraphs
Approx 1 Paragraph



The next question is what would these 7-10 Paragraphs be about?

Paragraphs - What are the 7-10 main topics?

Suggestions include:

1. Background of the concept/idea.
2. Analyse the concept into its key components.
3. Possibly a paragraph to analyse each component.
4. Analysis of other similar Concepts/Theories that support your argument.
5. Evaluate research that disputes or disagrees with your argument.
6. Evaluate Qualitative/Quantitative Research which prove your concept.
7. Synthesise this concept and draw conclusions, are there opportunities for further research?
8. Synthesise other applications for this information discussing specific benefits or return on investment.

NOTE: These are Guidelines only!! NOT Rules

Paragraph and Sentence structure will depend upon:

- The Type of Academic Writing.
- The Approach taken to the essay question.
- The Methods utilised.
- The Topic and amount of available Research.



Drafting your Essay



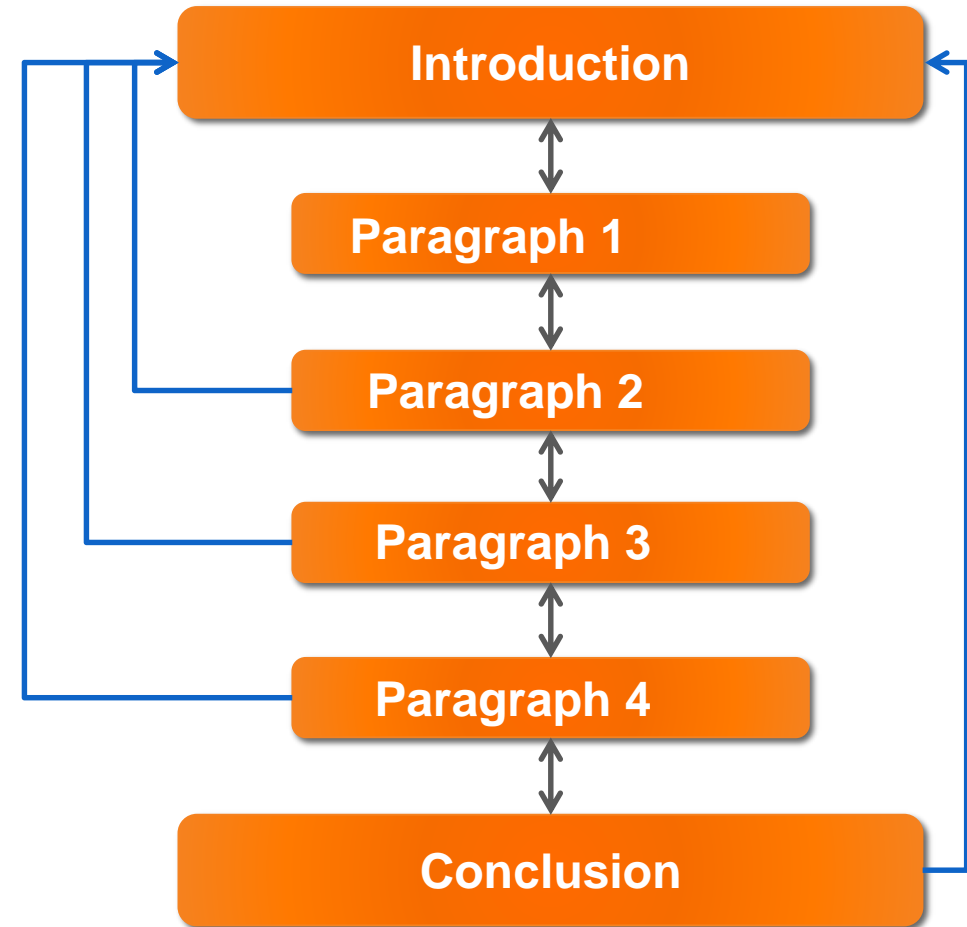
- Your Cover Page, Abstract and References are not included in your overall word count, so leave these till last.
- A useful hint is to keep the 'Assignment Question' in the Header section of your draft, it will keep you on track, but will not be included in your Word Count, you can delete it later.
- Start with your 'Introduction' - What is your essay about?
- Break down the 'Main Body' into the key paragraphs and sentences.
- Wrap up with your 'Conclusion' summarising the main points of your argument.



Drafting your Essay - Paragraphs

For an Essay to present a clear message, each paragraph must:

- Support the question or thesis statement (the argument).
- Follow logically on from the previous paragraph.
- Contain a lead in sentence to the next paragraph.
- Approximately 200-300 words.



Drafting your 'Introduction'

- Usually one paragraph (approx. 10% of Word Count).
- Orientates reader to general topic of essay and identifies the focus or purpose of essay.
- Specifically addresses your Assignment Question and Identifies the 'thesis' of essay (your argument).
- You may also need to define key terms.
- Outlines the main points that are going to be covered in essay and define the scope, what you are going to cover and what you are not going to cover.
- It tends to grow out of your research & consideration of the different viewpoints.



The 'Main Body' – Paragraphs and Sentences

- Paragraphs are the building blocks of the essay, and like an essay they have a beginning, middle and end.
- A Paragraph is generally communicating one argument.
- A good paragraph will contain these elements:
 - A **Topic sentence** that describes the argument that you want to make (not necessarily the 1st sentence).
 - **Supporting sentences** are an explanation, elaboration or development of that idea with evidence and examples.
 - A **Concluding sentence** that connects these thoughts and may lead into the next paragraph.



Writing Sentences and Paragraphs

- Be careful of the following:
 - Failing to provide a topic sentence, or the topic sentence does not link with the thesis statement.
 - Inadequate length; one or two sentences does not constitute a paragraph.
 - Failing to provide supporting evidence or examples.
 - Supporting materials are left to speak for themselves; there is a failure to comment on or connect the ideas drawn from the research to your argument.



The Keys to adding a Direct Quote

It is acceptable and sometimes beneficial to quote an author or source directly, such as:

- When someone has written something that you couldn't put better in your own words.
- When you want to disagree with the specifics of what someone has said.
- When you want to launch an interesting idea of your own that has been sparked by what someone else has said.
- Make sure that the direct quote is exactly the same, no editing or paraphrasing aloud.



The 'Conclusion'

- Most important part of your Essay.
- Briefly *recaps* the main ideas.
- *Restates* the line of argument and *confirms* the thesis statement.
- Makes final *evaluative comments* and broad *concluding thoughts* on the importance, implications or consequences of what has been discussed.
- One paragraph, so make it memorable and concise.
- Approximately 10% of the word count.



Tips for Writing 'Conclusions'



- Don't introduce new ideas.
- Don't include new evidence or references.
- Do not start a new line of your argument not previously mentioned.
- Check that you have used clear transition signals such as 'In conclusion' or 'In summary'.
- Check that you have summarised all of the key arguments.
- Check that you have done everything that your 'Introduction' said it would.

Editing your Essay



Editing is the process of re-reading the draft essay to assess and amend the *content* and *structure*.

- Reflect on the adequacy of research and response to the assignment task, have you achieved your Word Count?.
- Is anything unaddressed or underdeveloped?
- Assess whether the structure suits the content and fits with the vocabulary and conventions of academic writing?
- Edit long wordy sentences and paragraphs.



Editing and Finalising

- Reduce superfluous information (Normally 10% of Word Count either way is acceptable).
- Add your Bibliography – check that all references cited in your Essay appear correctly.
- Complete a Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation Check.
- Check Formatting: Double spaced, Font: Times New Roman or Arial 12pt font.
- Add your Cover Page.
- Complete your Abstract



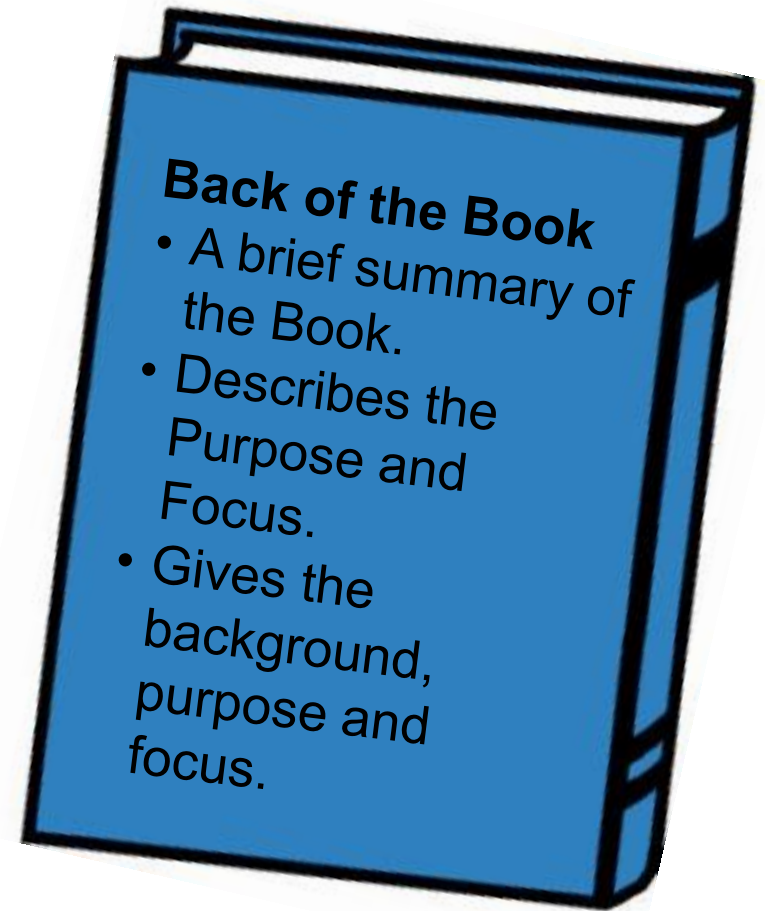
Revision: The 'Abstract'

- Provides a brief summary of the whole essay.
- It describes the major points; that is, the background, purpose, focus and thesis of the paper.
- A stand alone unit of information placed on a separate preliminary page.
- One well-developed paragraph that is coherent and concise, about 100-200 words.
- Written from the completed essay's perspective.
- **NOTE: *Not included in Word Count***



Steps to Writing Good Abstracts

- Reread your essay with the purpose of looking specifically for the: background, purpose, focus and thesis of the paper.
- Write a rough draft without merely copying key sentences from your Essay.
- Revise the draft abstract:
 - Correcting organisational weaknesses.
 - Dropping superfluous information and eliminating wordiness.
 - Adding relevant information originally omitted.



Submitting your Essay



- All assessments are uploaded to Moodle using Turnitin, there is a link in Moodle to 'click on'.
- Must be in Word format - .doc or .docx (No PDF's, Pages etc. unless otherwise specified).
- Correctly labelled file document:

coursecode_studentnumber_assessmenttype

Eg. RES101_A130001_Essay1.docx



Turn-it-in – Checking for Plagiarism



- After submitting your Assignment for Grading, you can check on the percentage of information that has been highlighted (in Colour) as the same or similar to other sources.
- This may take 10-15 mins to appear, you may have to refresh the screen.
- The highlighted information and the source that it has checked it against will be listed.
- Some information won't be an issue, for example; the Cover Page. Other information may have to be changed or you can add a direct quote.
- As this may have been a simple error or mistake, Turn-it-in allows you to change your Essay (providing you are still before the deadline).
- Once your Essay has been amended you will need to upload it again.

Marking Guides and Grading

- Marking Guide can assist you to understand what the Lecturer/Assessor is looking for in an assignment.
- Grades will appear in Moodle, you will receive an email to advise that your assignment has been graded.
- Lecturers workloads increase significantly towards the end of a semester, the time to Grade Assignments will vary. Please be patient as your lecturer can feel like this...



Grading

Grades	Lowest	Highest
High Distinction (HD)	85%	100.00%
Distinction (D)	75%	84.99%
Credit (Cr)	65%	74.99%
Pass(P)	50%	64.99%
Fail (F)	0%	49.99%



- Assignments that are submitting late will incur marking penalties.
- Assignments that are not submitted at all, receive a 'Fail' (0%).