

What is a Thematic Essay and how will it be marked?

The following definition is somewhat ambiguous, as a thematic essay can vary so much from question to question. Our suggestion would be to take what follows as a basic framework and note that the assessment question in your subject outline will provide more precision and clarity.

A thematic essay, as the name suggests, explores a theme through a book of the bible or in a particular author. For example: “In 2 Corinthians, Paul lists numerous sufferings at various stages of the letter; what is his understanding of suffering in the context of his ministry?” In this sort of paper, the focus is not necessarily on a single passage, so in this way it is not a straightforward exegesis; however, it will require some exegetical skill in highlighting the context of the passages in question. (NOTE: focus on answering the question, keeping to the topic and not including 'interesting but not essential' information. For example, detailed information about authorship issues of a book should not be included unless it contributes to answering the question of the essay.) Its focus, then, is to draw out the central theme(s) as expressed through the various passages and present these in a clear, concise manner.

The purpose of this sort of paper is to develop a biblically grounded understanding of various issues of faith and life. It may offer opportunity to critique contemporary ideas found within the church, or it may simply aim to bring clarity to areas that are not so well defined. Whatever the case may be, it is the opportunity to reflect on important issues and bring key biblical texts to bear on the discussion.

At a scholarly level, the student is expected to engage (to varying degrees depending on the level of the subject, i.e. BIB400-500) with the leading scholars from various church traditions on that particular subject. See the document regarding “what is good biblical scholarship?” that is part of this Moodle page for more information about this. They are then required to present a quality piece of academic writing that addresses all the points as set out in the marking grid. At a structural level, a thematic essay should contain a title page, an abstract, introduction, and conclusion. It should also contain headings that clearly set out the structure of the paper. Biblical texts, footnotes, abstracts, and bibliography are not included in the word count.

All thematic essays submitted to AC will use the following grid:

<p>Theme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate passages highlighted • Passages situated within their historical and social context • Key theme identified and discussed within its historical setting • Key terms identified and discussed in light of this theme 	/10
<p>Grammar and research:</p>	/5

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriate academic sources used (8-10)• Proper referencing (correct style of footnotes and bibliography)• Correct grammar• Abstract, introduction, conclusion• Headings	
<p>Contemporary discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contemporary understanding of the theme identified• Where appropriate, critique of contemporary understanding• Theme discussed and appropriated to a modern context	/10