Structuring your assignment

Student & Library Services

https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/structure
Learning Outcomes

By the end of this workshop you should be able to:

• Identify what the assessment criteria is asking you to do
• Plan your argument
• Structure paragraphs, conclusions and introductions
TIME

- Targeted
- In-depth
- Measured
- Evidence-based
Unpick assignment title

- What are you being asked to do?
- Check assignment criteria
- Look for clue words
- Define subject

- This forms our draft introduction
Assessment criteria

• At Teesside, you’ll find your assessment criteria in your Module Handbook.
• If it’s not in the criteria, it doesn’t belong – you won’t have the word count – you won’t get extra marks
  • Criteria are there to guide you. They will let you know what you should put into your assignment
  • You usually need to cover all the criteria to pass an assignment
  • Use the words from the criteria in your assignment to make it clear when you are covering them
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyse</td>
<td>Pick out the key points of a topic. Consider those key points in depth, including how they relate to each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Look at the similarities and differences between two aspects. Say if any are more important than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Look at the similarities and differences between two aspects, but focus on the differences between them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Give the exact meaning of a topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate</td>
<td>Show how, with examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Give a detailed explanation of a topic or issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Write about both sides of a topic in depth, pointing out advantages and disadvantages. Come to a conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Consider the strength of an idea, looking for both positives and negatives. Come to a conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Make it clear how and why something happens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Point out what a topic covers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Full list available via TIME model (Targeted) on the Structuring Assignment LibGuide: [https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/structure](https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/structure)
Example

Title
Discuss why some confectionery products are getting smaller

Assessment Criteria
• Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the economic and health issues affecting the confectionery industry
• Explain the reasoning behind your opinion on confectionery products and relative sizes
• Adhere to the School guidelines for presentation and referencing
Generate ideas

IN-DEPTH

• Possible ways of looking at the criteria – definitions / limits
• What do you know about this subject already?
• Be as creative as you can
  • Mind mapping?
1st draft organising ideas

• Organise ideas into themes
• Divide each idea into a section on your plan
  • Separate document?
  • Section on pie chart?
• Each section will become one or more paragraphs
• Keywords for research
Example plan

- Anna Barker’s idea
  - Royal Literary Fellow
- Separate topics
- Visual prompt
- Colour-coded

Assignment

- Intro – 5-10% (pink)
  - Theme 1 (green)
  - Theme 2 (red)
  - Theme 3 (purple)
  - Theme 4 (orange)
- Conclusion – 5-10% (blue)
Example plan for the assignment

Introduction (5-10%)

Theme 1: Economy
• Manufacturing Costs

Theme 2: Economy
• Company Profits

Theme 3: Health
• Obesity

Theme 4: Health
• Dental Problems

Confectionery products getting smaller

Conclusion (5-10%)

https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/structure
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wordcount</th>
<th>Key points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
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<td>Theme 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 3 etc.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Organising your points

• Put each point on a PowerPoint slide
• Drag and drop them to reorder them until you find a logical order
• Each slide represents a paragraph

(Cooper and Shoolbred, 2016)
1\textsuperscript{st} draft conclusion

• Argument – what you are trying to say in your essay
  • Your key point or message

• First guess at what you think – might change after you have researched

• First draft of conclusion so you know where you are heading
Exploring possible conclusions

STEP 0: Write down your title or question
STEP 1: Make your question into a statement
STEP 2: Reverse or negate the statement
STEP 3: Explore variations on the statement by making it more or less certain, more or less specific.

(Adapted from: Queen Mary, University of London (no date) Unpacking a question and making a statement with guidelines for teachers.pdf Available at: http://www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk/ideas/assessments (Accessed: 15 Oct 2020)
Research

• Start with Discovery and LibGuide
• Aim for academic literature
• Support available
• Research will:
  • Confirm your argument
  • Provide evidence for your ideas
  • May suggest new ideas
Activity

• Read the short paragraph on the topic
• Identify relevant ideas/evidence you could use in the example assignment
Global confectioner Mars signed up to the government’s public health responsibility deal in 2011 and has since complied with pledges to reduce salt in its pasta sauces and lower the saturated fat content of some of its chocolate bars.

In 2013 the company announced that as part of its public health commitment it was going to cut the energy content in all of its single serving products to less than 250 calories by reducing their size. It w
Evidence - Economy

As The Grocer noted, the company had reduced the size of its bars before, without making any public health claims, “in the wake of big hikes in the cost of chocolate-making over the past decade.”

Forbes reported, “beverage giants The Coca-Cola Company and PepsiCo have looked to keep their product mix favourable, in order to achieve market expansion.”

Translation? Smaller cans increased sales volumes and profits, and Forbes predicted that as a consequence Coca-Cola’s share price would rise some 6%.

cutting. At the end of 2013 Rabobank, a leading bank in the food and agriculture sectors, predicted correctly that sugar prices would increase by more than 8% in 2014. This, reported Confectionery News, would mean “confectioners will be dealt a double blow in 2014 as cocoa prices are also expected to surge as cocoa production fails to keep up with consumption.”

In September 2014 the bank predicted prices would rise
Evidence – Balance of both health and economy

... Evidence also underlines the responsibility deal. But according to a recent investors’ report last June, Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have likewise been inspired to downsize their products as much out of concern for the health of their balance sheets as for their customers’ wellbeing.
Example ideas

• Public health commitment vs increase in sales volumes
• Previous reductions in size without health claim or price reduction
• Increase in raw materials cost
• Soft drinks also downsizing but smaller cans lead to increase in sales & profits without a reduction in calories consumed
Reality

- You will need to read more than 1 paper!
- Academic papers are long
- Your ideas may change as you do your research
- There may be aspects that you don’t understand initially
Paragraphs

• How to structure a paragraph
  • What: Topic sentence
  • Examples and evidence
  • Do: Sum up and link to next paragraph
  • Use WEED model (Godwin, 2019)

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WHAT:

As sugar is one of the key ingredients in confectionery products, when health concerns surrounding sugar increase, the confectionery industry need to respond.

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EVIDENCE/EXAMPLES:

The obesity epidemic is a major social health concern and even though research does not currently prove that sugar is the cause, the food and beverage industry need to address it in order to avoid regulation, taxation and negative public opinion (Gornall, 2015, p.2). During the 20th century the majority of diet related diseases moved from lack of food intake to too much food consumption, as a result health authorities are complaining about excessive sugar as it promotes weight gain and other chronic health diseases (Nestle, 2015, pp.53-54).
DO:

The increasing concern from authorities and the public, about the negative impact of sugar on health, is cause for confectionery industries to address their processes in order to avoid a downturn in sales and face an increase in regulation.

Putting it together

• How well does it flow?
• Paragraphs should follow on – logical order for your argument
• This could be the order of the criteria
Your conclusion

• Should be about 5-10% of the final word count

• Final version
  • Recap
  • Summary of main findings
  • Your general conclusions and why they are important
  • Last sentence – sum it all up and link back to title
  • NO new material
Introduction

• Written last
• Should be about 5-10% of the final word count
• It is an introduction to your assignment, not the whole topic
• Frame the subject – any boundaries?
• Putting the subject in context e.g. definitions
• Say what you will argue
• Guiding the reader – signposts to what the assignment contains
Checking your work

• Proof read - for structure and errors
• May need to re-write or revise parts
• Check your references
  • Do you have all the details?
  • Are they in the correct style?
• All this takes time!
Support Available

• Learning Hub
  • Website – http://tees.libguides.com/learning_hub
  • One-to-one tutorials
• Royal Literary Fellow
  • https://www.facebook.com/rlfteesside
Other workshops for writing

• Academic Writing
• Critical Writing
• How to Use References
• Different styles of writing
  • Report Writing
  • Reflective Writing
  • Writing a Literature Review
• How to Read an Academic Article
• Online tutorial for how to proofread: http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/proofreading

https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/learning_hub
Resources


Queen Mary, University of London (no date) *Unpacking a question and making a statement with guidelines for teachers.pdf* Available at: [http://www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk/ideas/assessments](http://www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk/ideas/assessments) (Accessed: 15 Oct 2020)