



Prifysgol Cymru

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Trinity Saint David

Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

ECSO5002

Experiential Placement: Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

Workshop: Introductions and Conclusions: How to Maximise your Marks



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Session Aims:

- In this session, students will be able to gain the knowledge and understanding of the key points needed when writing an introduction and a conclusion.
- This will be achieved by:
 - Focussing on the individual elements that should be included within an introduction, providing a practical example.
 - Focussing on the 'point' of a conclusion, including the development of an argument throughout the main body of work.
- There are TWO practical tasks within this session as formative assessment.





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Introduction to Introductions

Introductions

- Hello,
- My name is Laura Jenkins
- Today I will be talking to you about introductions and conclusions
- In this presentation, I will be exploring the main points to introductions, and the main points to conclusions.

Introductions - TASK

- Please take 10 minutes to write an introduction about yourself.
- Please now introduce yourself to the class.

Introductions - TASK

- What were the common factors to your introductions?

Introductions

- Your introduction is the first thing your marker will read and should be approximately 10% of your word count.
- Within the first minute they should know if your essay is going to be a good one or not.
- An introduction has several components but the most important of these are:
 - Stating your case
 - Confirming your position
- You need to show the reader what your position is and how you are going to argue the case to get there so the essay becomes YOUR answer to the question, rather than just an answer.

Introductions: What should it include?

1. A little basic background about the key subject area (just enough to put your essay into context, no more or you'll bore the reader)
2. Explanation of how you are defining any key terms. Confusion on this could be your undoing.
3. A 'road-map' of how your essay will answer the question. What is your overall argument and how will you develop it?
4. A confirmation of your position



Introductions: Background Information

- It is good to start with a statement that fixes your essay topic and focus in a wider context so that the reader is sure of where they are within the field.
 - This is a very small part of your introduction though – do not fall into the trap of writing a whole paragraph that is nothing but background information.
- Beware though, this only has to be a little bit wider, not completely universal.
- That is, do not start with something like ‘in the whole field of neurodiversity...’ or ‘Since man could write, he has always...’.
- Instead, simply situate the area that you are writing about within a slightly bigger area



Introductions: Background Information

- For example, you could start with a general statement about your topic, outlining some key issues but explain that your essay will focus on only one.

The ability to communicate effectively and compassionately is a key skill within nursing. Communication is about more than being able to speak confidently and clearly, it is about effective listening (Singh, 2019), the use of gesture, body language and tone (Adebe et al., 2016) and the ability to tailor language and messaging to particular situations (Smith & Jones, 2015). This essay will explore the importance of non-verbal communication ...

Introductions: Defining Key Terms

- This does not mean quoting dictionary definitions
 - We all have access to online dictionaries!
- There are many words we use in academic work that can have multiple or nuanced definitions.
- You have to write about HOW you are defining any potentially ambiguous terms in relation to your essay topic.
- This is really important for your reader, as it will inform them how you are using such words in the context of your essay and prevent confusion or misunderstanding.



Introductions: Stating your case (road mapping)



- The main thing in introduction will do is... introduce your essay!
- That means you need to tell the reader what your conclusion is and how you will get there.
- There is no need to worry about *SPOILER ALERTS*
 - This is not a detective novel, you can give away the ending! Building up suspense is just going to annoy the reader rather than eventually satisfy.
- Simply outline how your main arguments (Give them in order) lead to your conclusion.

Introductions: Stating your case (road mapping)



- In American essay guidelines you will see something described as the ‘thesis statement’ – although we don’t use this terminology in the UK, it is still necessary to state in your introduction what the over-arching argument of your essay will be.
- Think of it as a ‘mega-argument’, to distinguish it from the ‘mini-arguments’ you make in each paragraph.



Introductions: Confirming your position

- To some extent, this is covered in your roadmap (Previous slides), but is important, so it deserves some additional attention.
- Setting out your position is an essential component of all essays
- ‘The purpose of an essay is to present a clear position and defend it’ (Brick *et al.*, 2016, p.143)



Introductions: Confirming your position

- It is, however, very difficult to defend a position if you have not made it clear in the first place.
- This is where your introduction come in.
- In stating your position, you are ultimately outlining the answer to your question.
- You can then make the rest of your essay about providing the evidence that supports your answer.
- As such, if you make your position clear, you will find all subsequent paragraphs in your essay easier to write and join together.
- As you have already told your reader where the essay is going, you can be explicit in how each paragraph contributes to your mega-argument.



Introductions: Confirming your position

- In establishing your position and defending it, you are ultimately engaging in scholarly debate.
- This is because your positions are supported by academic evidence and analysis.
- It is in your analysis of the academic evidence that should lead your reader to understand your position.
- Once again – this is only possible if your introduction has explained your position in the first place.

Introductions: For Example,

Stories have been an essential communication technique for thousands of years and although teachers and parents still think they are important for educating younger children, they have been restricted to the role of entertainment for most of us since our teenage years. This essay will claim that stories make ideal pedagogical tools, whatever the age of the student, due to their unique position in cultural and cognitive development. To argue this, it will consider three main areas: firstly, the prevalence of stories across time and cultures and how the similarity of story structure suggests an inherent understanding of their form which could be of use to academics teaching multicultural cohorts when organising lecture material; secondly, the power of stories to enable listeners to personally relate to the content and how this increases the likelihood of changing thoughts, behaviours and decisions - a concept that has not gone unnoticed in some fields, both professional and academic; and finally, the way that different areas of the brain are activated when reading, listening to or watching a story unfold, which suggests that both understanding and ease of recall, two key components of learning, are both likely to be increased. Each of these alone could make a reasoned argument for including more stories within higher education teaching – taken together, this argument is even more compelling.



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Concluding your Conclusion

Conclusions

- Conclusions are often overlooked, cursory and written last minute
- All other parts of the essay should have been leading your reader on an inevitable journey towards your conclusion.
- So, make it count!

Conclusions: Know where you are going

- Most of the time, students focus on their essay content rather than an argument.
- This means that they pay too much attention to the main body without considering where it is leading.
- It can be a good idea to write a draft conclusion before you write your main body.
- It is a lot easier to plan a journey when you know your destination.
- It should be a draft however, as quite often the writing process itself can help you develop your argument and you may feel your conclusion needs adapting accordingly.

Conclusions: What it should include

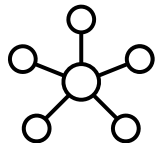
- A good conclusion should include:



A clear link back to the question. This is usually the first thing you do in a conclusion, as it shows that you have (hopefully) answered it.



A sentence or two that summarises your main argument but, in more detail than you gave in your introduction.



A series of supporting sentences that basically reiterate the main point of each of your paragraphs but show how they relate to each other and lead you to the position you have taken. Constantly ask yourself "So what?" "Why should anyone care?" and answer these questions for each of the points you make in your conclusion.



A final sentence that states why your ideas are important to the wider subject area. Where the introduction goes from general to specific, the conclusion needs to go from specific back out to general.

Conclusions: What it should not include

- Try to avoid including the following into your conclusion. Remember that your conclusion should be entirely predictable. The reader wants no surprises.



Any new Ideas. If an idea is worth including, put it in the main body. You should re cite your citations from the main body if you are referring to specific points made.



A Change of style i.e. being more emotional or sentimental than the rest of the essay. Keep it straightforward, explanatory and clear.



Overused phrases like: “in conclusion”; “in summary”; “as shown in this essay”. Consign these to the rubbish bin!

Here are some alternatives, there are many more:

The x main points presented here emphasise the importance of...

The [insert something relevant] outlined above indicate that ...

By showing the connections between x, y and z, it has been argued here that ...

Conclusions: Maximising your marks

- Remember, your conclusion is the last thing that your reader (Marker!) will read.
- Spending a little care on it will leave him/her absolutely sure that you have answered the question, and you will receive a higher mark than if your conclusion was a quickly written afterthought.

Conclusion – TASK

- Use the slides from today to write a conclusion.
- Utilise the question:
- *Explore the main points that will support students to utilise their introduction and conclusion when writing an academic submission.*

References

- Brick, J., Herke, M., and Wong, D., (2016) *Academic Culture, A students guide to studying at university*, 3rd edition. Victoria, Australia: Palgrave Macmillan.
- University of Hull (2024) *Essay Writing* Available at: [Conclusions - Essay writing - Library at University of Hull](#) (Accessed: 15-04-2024)