

Pre session polls

What level of study are you?

- Access
- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Postgraduate

What would you consider is your main area of study?

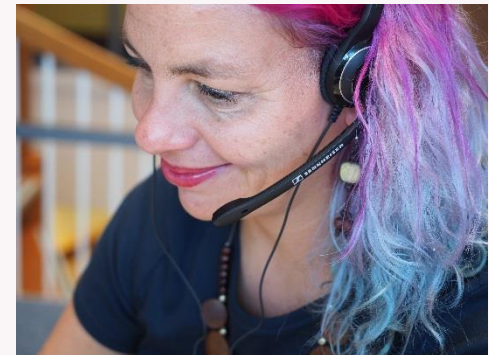
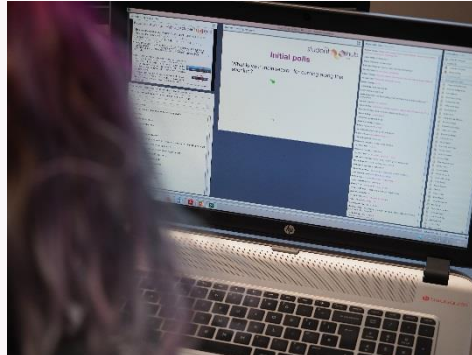
- Arts
- Languages (English & other)
- Social sciences
- Business and law
- Science
- Engineering or technology
- Maths
- Health sciences
- Education
- Sports
- OTHER

Have you been to any student hub live online events before?

- No (I'm brand new!)
- No (but have listened to one or more recordings)
- No (didn't have time)
- No (wasn't aware of before now)
- Yes this academic year (2019 since September)
- Yes last academic year (2019 up to August)
- Yes previous year (any 2018)
- Yes other

What are student hub live online sessions?

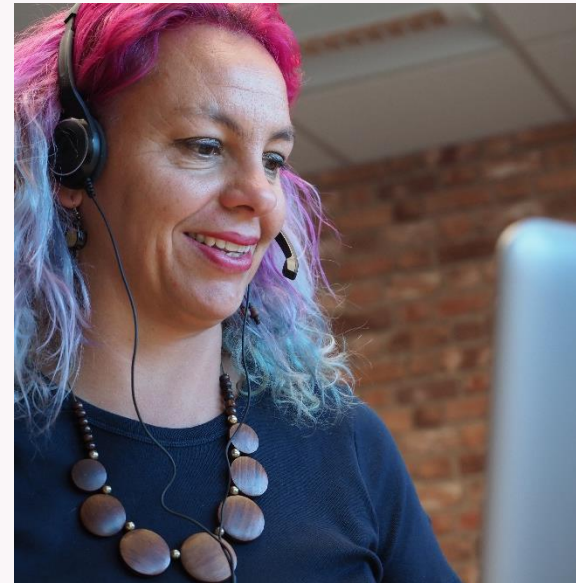
- All student hub live sessions are non modular and focus on skills relevant to study at university level
- Polls are anonymous to other participants but the chat box will have your logged in name associated with your comments
- All online sessions are recorded and available to view on catch up on a public facing website. *Small group discussions are not recorded.*
- Slides are available at the end of the session and from the main website



student hub live is the OU's live online interactive platform to support academic community



Karen Foley is a lecturer at the OU, head of student hub live and chairs Y032. She also tutors in social sciences, psychology and science.



Isabella Henman is an essay writing aficionado and skills trainer. She tutors in science and health sciences at Access to level 2.

Initial polls

What is your main reason for coming along this evening?

(If you are on a mobile device remember you need to tap into the polling option)



To come back to these slides after completing a poll click on the share pod slides icon



Essay writing

This was our advert...

This workshop builds on the essay-planning session (although attendance of that workshop is not a requirement) and will cover the drafting and editing process. Often you might know what you want to say but aren't able to get everything in within the word count, or are unclear about the most effective ordering of information. We'll cover some of the key points of good essays and help you to think about what works, and how you can weave your evidence into your own great essay.

Workshop

- This is going to be a structured workshop to help you get thinking
- We'll look at what is meant by essay writing, including some different styles and methods, as well as key points for what needs to be included
- Then we'll give some tutor advice
- You'll also get the chance to discuss things with others in a small group

Session purpose

- **Is for:**
- Covering the basics of essay writing
- Give some guidance about ways to write effectively and at an appropriate level
- Provide a space to share ideas and connect with other students
- **Is not for:**
- Telling you what you HAVE to do
- Providing any module specific advice

Planning recap

- A plan is a road map of what you intend to do. It helps you to know what you intend to do and allows you to know whether you have done this
- The format of that road map is up to you
- You can also think of it as a recipe which makes it clear what is going to go into the essay and the order
- Effective essays are planned so that you have a clear idea of what you are going to do and can then know how to achieve that
- Any plan needs to have enough information for you or someone else with a reasonable grasp of the content to pick up and be clear on what is intended

First thoughts

Do you know what a process word is?

- Yes
- No

- Can you say what your understanding of one is?
(use the short answer poll provided)

Process words

- These are the instructions that tell you what you need to do:
 - Describe
 - Explain
 - Critically analyse
-
- We strongly recommend the studenthome > study skills resources here - <https://help.open.ac.uk/understanding-the-question>

A journey



- A river starts somewhere
- It goes somewhere
- It has a journey which may be different along the way

An essay journey

- An essay also starts somewhere and it goes somewhere and it will have differences along the way
- You need to let your reader know this so that they know what to expect. Where are the highlights, when can they relax, what should they not miss and how will they know they are approaching that part of the journey?
- The introduction is the best place to make that clear, but you can also signpost along the way

SHL essay example

- Describe your "study buddy" and explain how they help you complete your assignment
- Use the short answer poll to provide some ideas about how you would go about this essay and if there is anything important to note

Important points

- Description may include personal characteristics
- It is traits that help the explanation aspect
 - E.g. may sleep a lot, give comfort
- Description is always relative, not just in and of itself
- This means you need to describe some elements and details but these need to be contextual

Levels will differ

- Bear in mind that the descriptive component, critical analysis and evaluation within an essay will differ according to your level. So some points may be less relevant whereas others will be more relevant
- E.g. a level 1 essay will not expect a high level of analysis, but a level 3 one will.

Poll time

Which of the following aspects of the essay writing process is most important to you personally?

- Identifying the content
- Articulating how the content relates to the point
- Structuring overall
- Referencing correctly
- Editing
- Critical evaluation

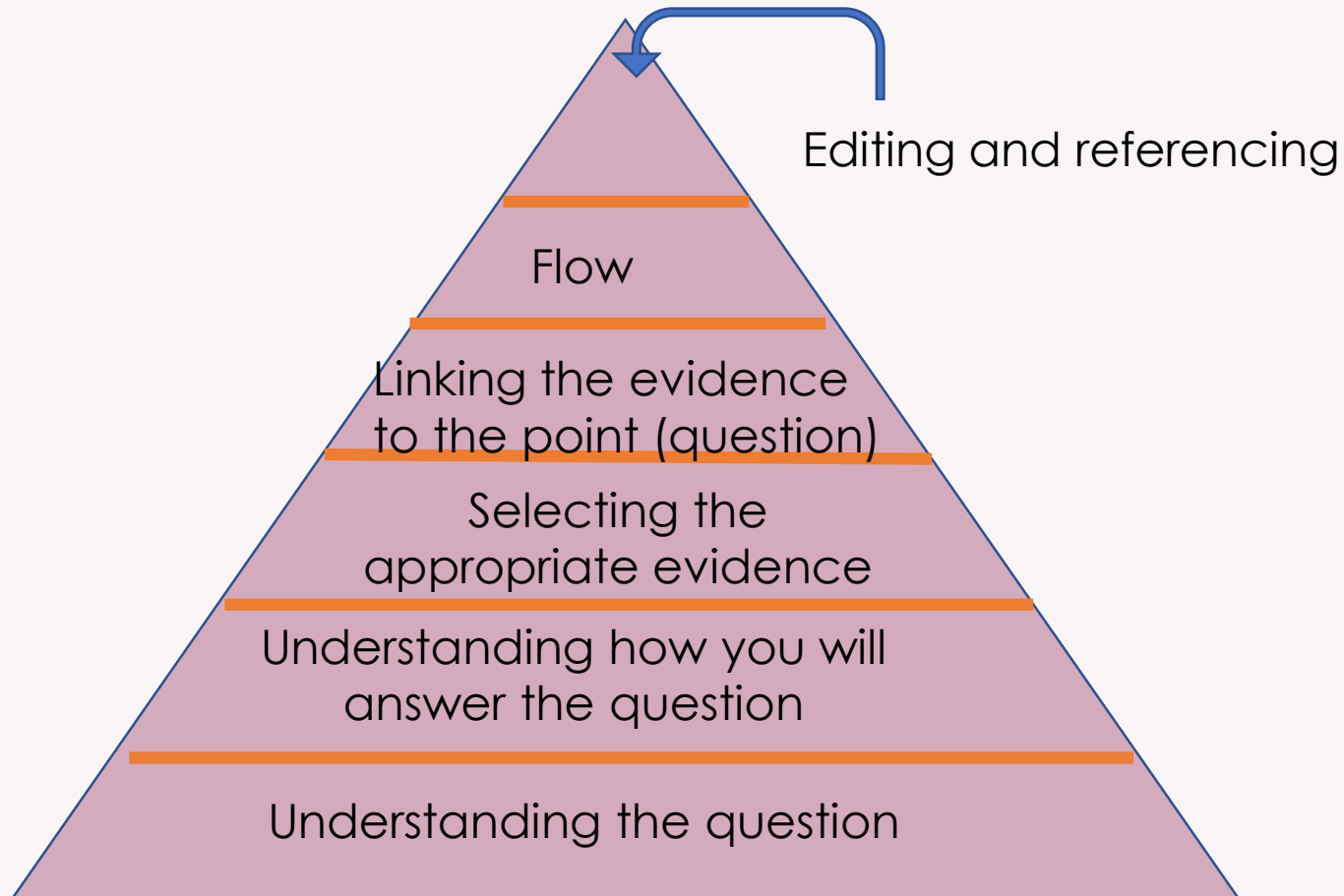
Why did we ask this?

- If you don't know what you want to say you can't expect to say it well!
- What you need to do at level 1 will be different to what you need to do at level 2, level 3 postgraduate etc
- You may be working on developing a specific skill

Hierarchy of essay needs

- Understanding the question
- Understanding **how** you will answer the question
- Selecting the appropriate evidence
- Linking the evidence to the points you are making (to address the question)
- Flow
- Editing and referencing

Hierarchy of essay needs



Structure ideas

- PEE
 - Point – make it
 - Evidence – support it with facts
 - Explain – why the evidence is supportive and it is relevant

Or

- PESELS
 - Point - make the point for this paragraph
 - Explain - what do you mean by this point
 - Support - provide evidence from studies and research
 - Evaluate - what is there about this point that is for/against
 - Link - to the essay task
 - Signpost - to the next paragraph

Pace and flow

- Look back to our river example...
- The essay must continuously progress, or you are in the doldrums
- But a ride over lots of rapids without any sense of direction can leave the reader confused
- At times the pace can be fast, and at other times it can be slower (when you need a lot of detail)

Think about question

- Do you know what the question / task is?
- You need to!
- You will get marks for answering the question and addressing the task, not for going off on a tangent
- Check the learning outcomes

Main argument

- You need to be clear what your main argument is
- Check the instructions, including process words
- Ideally, a clear central theme or tenet will run through your essay to make that main argument clear

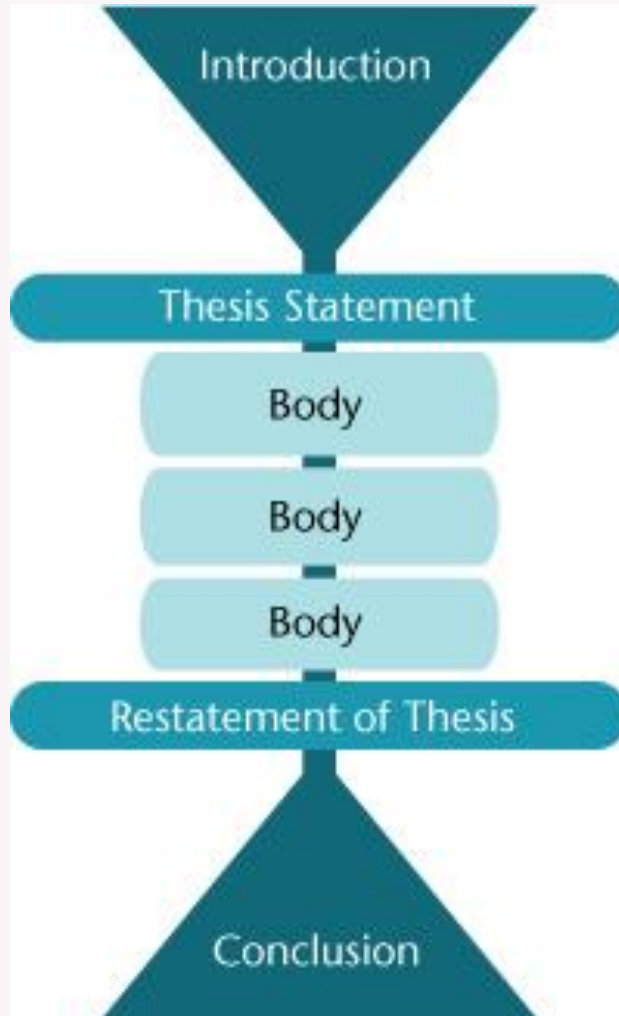
Process / stages...

- Your TMA could go through these stages:
 - Understanding the question
 - Doing your research and identifying what *you could* use
 - Go back to the question and think about what is *best* to use to most effectively answer the question
 - Think – does it make sense? Can you explain your answer to your cat, dog or a friend?
 - **Write your assignment.**
 - Go back to the module material and check that you have conveyed it as you understand it
 - Put your assignment away for a night.
 - Read it again. Read it out loud. Make any corrections.
 - Submit it

Planning & scoping material

- We covered planning in the separate session but this leads to scoping material
- Scoping means identifying the material and content that needs to go in
- You must work out what is going to be relevant and equally ignore what is not relevant *regardless of how interesting it is!*

Structure



The thesis statement is what you aim to deliver in the essay and is a concise summary of this – usually one sentence

Structure

- You can adopt a structure like this if you wish but the key is to ensuring that the essay funnels in important information.
 - So the introduction frames what is needed
 - then the information is covered before..
 - the funnel moves back out to summarise
- All words apart from the main content and argument should be framing and shaping essay

Zigzag approach

- There are different ways to structure essays
- The zig zag approach is useful when you have more than one thing to do (describe and explain for example)
- Define a point and then give the details within each paragraph
 - E.g. this is feature 1 of study buddy and why is useful
 - Then move on to this is feature 2..
- Many points could be a generalised aspect e.g. dog gets me out and helps me exercise.

Block approach

- Where you want to separate clear sections e.g. describe and explain
- Cover all of one style of information first then move on to the next
- This may be dependent on instructions, e.g. you may be told what to cover in each paragraph
- However make sure that you are relating information overall to topic rather than relying on the reader recalling what you had covered and assuming the link (that you haven't actually given). Consider linking sentences also

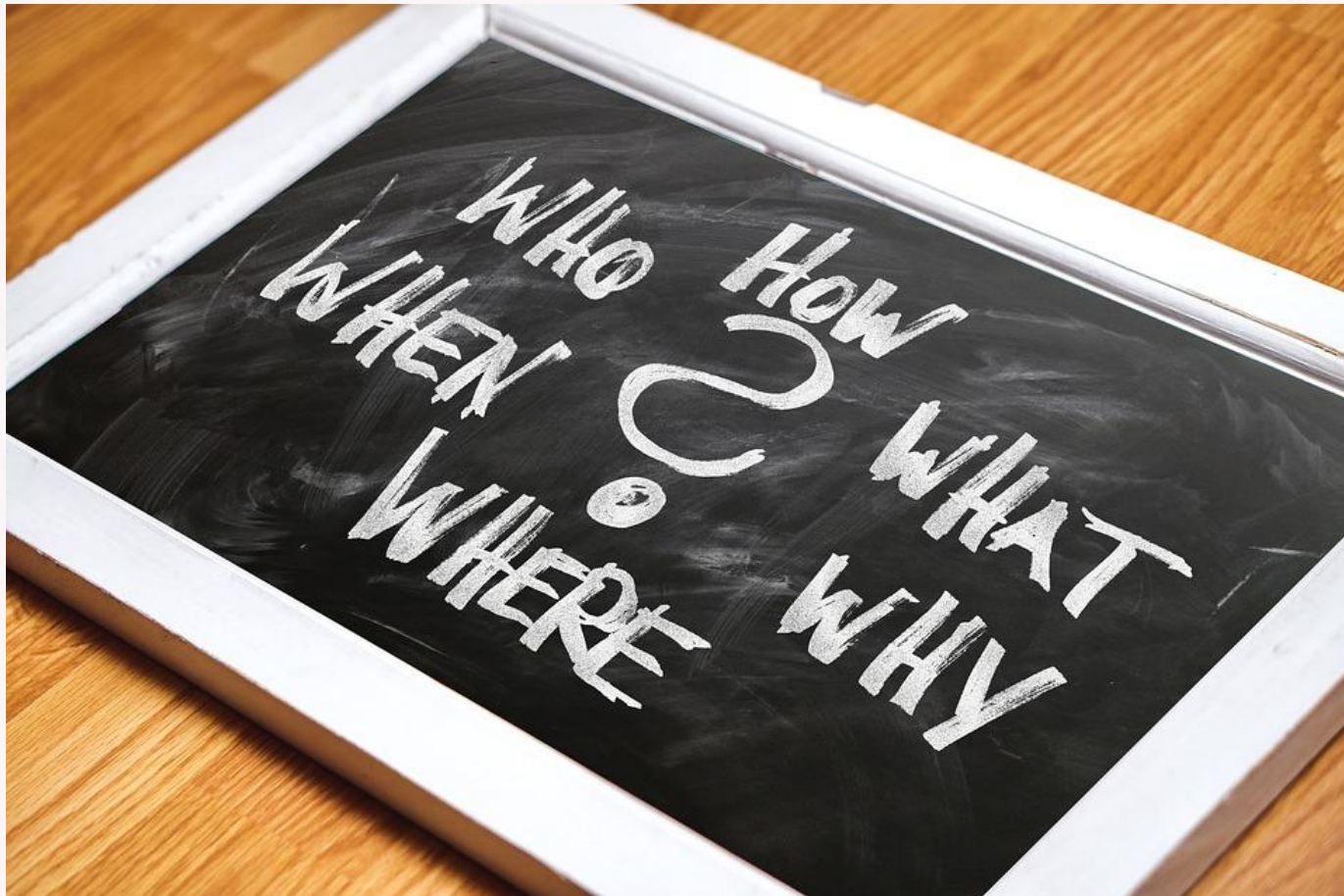
Editing

- This is the point at which all the ideas are neatened up and made as good as possible
- There are stages

Fresh Eyes



The task is clear



Structure



Position



Presentation

I HOPE THE GUY WHO
INVENTED AutoCorrect BURNS
IN HELLO!

Editing summary

- Use fresh eyes
- Ensure the task that is being addressed **is** being addressed and it is clear
- Check structure is effective
- Have alternative viewpoints been covered as needed?
- Is the presentation what it needs to be?

Information polls

What level of study are you?

- Access
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- Level 2
- Level 3
- Postgraduate

Are you currently...? (please choose the one that is closest)

- Brand new to OU study
- Have done at least one previous OU module (in last few years)
- Have done at least one previous OU module (many years ago)

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- Yes other

Discussion activity

- Discuss with your group what you think is the most important thing **you** need to develop in terms of essay writing
- Please bring back a few points that you can share with the rest of the group
- You do not have to speak on mic if you don't want to but please do interact with your group using the chat option

Useful points for breakouts

- We suggest you use the first couple of minutes to introduce yourselves and get used to the room. Choose a volunteer to keep the discussion on track and feed back to the main room
- Remember to activate your microphone to speak as per the instructions given.
- Breakout groups work best if people engage and contribute and discuss
- There will be ~10 minutes for the breakouts overall – we'll send regular reminders to let you know how long you have got left

Remember to check the number of the room you are in (shows at top of chat pod as “chat x breakout y”) in case of connection issues and for bringing back information.



Breakout activity

- Discuss with your group what you think is the most important thing **you** need to develop in terms of essay writing.
- Please bring back a few points that you can share with the rest of the group
- You do not have to speak on mic if you don't want to but please do interact with your group using the chat option

This session is currently in breakouts (small groups).

If you are part of this group and have had connection issues please let us know your room
If you are just arriving in this room and are not part of this live session then please log in at the advertised room opening time to take part (15 mins prior to advertised session time).

So....

- What can people share from their sessions?
- Additional poll – for anyone brand new to studenthublive sessions – please say how you found the session.

Take home message

- Essay writing is a process and takes practice
- An essay is a story that communicates a topic in a structured way and all paragraphs relate to that topic, even though they may have their own mini topic

Final polls

What do you feel is the main thing you will take away from this session?

What are you going to do as a result of this session?

Which of the following elements of this session did you find useful?

- Tutor led explanation
- Opportunity to chat in text chat box
- Opportunity to suggest ideas in polls
- Opportunity to read ideas suggested in polls
- Breakout room (discussion with / learning from other students)
- Breakout activity (reflecting on the concepts in more detail)
- Any other aspect (please give details in chat)

Upcoming 2020 sessions

- 22nd January 11am and 7pm Critical thinking and writing
- 5th February 7pm Effective online communication
- 13th February 7pm Essay planning
- 25th February 7pm Essay writing
- 3rd March 7pm Report writing
- 22nd April 7pm Developing a good academic argument

Details and booking information from <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

This session's slides are available to download from the link provided. Click on the title then download file and it will download to wherever downloads go on your own computer

Past student hub live online sessions [here](#)

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studenthub@open.ac.uk

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www.youtube.com/thestudenthublive

