

**KAREN FOLEY:** So Isabella Henman, here we are again talking about essays, with drafting and structuring being the title for this session. So what have we got in store for our students?

**ISABELLA HENMAN:** So we've moved on. We've talked about what we know about what we're actually doing, so unpacking the question. And now we're working with the next bit, actually starting to get some of it down on paper and knowing how are you going to do it. So we're actually looking for the what do you actually need to find to answer the question. That's the plan. And actually coming up with a plan, what do I need to do? How am I going to go about doing this essay?

**KAREN FOLEY:** So it's this whole thing really about starting to plan your essay, something that sounds students really like and some students don't really like.

**ISABELLA HENMAN:** Absolutely, yeah. It's one of those things. Some modules, they do have marks allocated for plans. Even if they don't, we really encourage people to use a plan because it helps you get your ideas in the right place in the first place.

It helps you get your head from your toe, knowing what you're doing. And if you've got something, even if it's 50 words, knowing first, I'm going to do this, or I need to be able to get this information, or I know something is on page 44 or is on this web link or wherever. At least if you've got an idea about what you need to do, then you know whether you've done it. Because again, like we talked about in the first session, you have got to have an idea about what you're doing, because otherwise how do you know whether you've done it or not?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Now, I often have students they come and say, I don't have time to plan this essay. I just want to start writing it. So what is this whole idea, then, about investing time into planning before you start actually producing something?

**ISABELLA HENMAN:** Again, I would say putting a little bit of time in at the start is going to help here. Because if you've got a decent plan and you know what you're doing, I've already said it; you know whether you've done it. And it does help. Because when you're new to essays, you can go off on a complete tangent.

You can spend a lot of time finding information. And then it's not what you want to do. It's not what you're supposed to do, rather. So putting a bit of time in actually helps you. And once you get more experienced, it won't take anywhere near as long to plan. And you can actually look

at a title, and you can immediately know what you're supposed to do. But I really would encourage people to get into the habit of planning to begin with because it does help.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So, I mean, without going into too much detail here, because that's what we're going to do in the session, what do you actually mean, then, by an essay plan?

**ISABELLA HENMAN:** So you can have a number of different plans. You can have just your ideas. It's basically you brainstorm of looking at the question and saying, what do I need to answer that question? Sometimes I encourage people to plan before they've even read the material, to say, this is what your question is. OK, I'm going to have to find it.

If our session is planning and structuring, what did I need to do when I was thinking about planning and structuring? Well, I had to think about, what a plan is, what a structure is, where am I going to find out that information, where am I going to go. Once I found out which is the relevant information, which is decent.

So it's sort of a number of different things. And it's also thinking about the basic structure, things like have you got an introduction? Are you making sure you address every bit of the question? Because your plan probably should mention that. Because you might find that there's A, an initial question, and then there's, oh, critically analyse or discuss both sides, or say about different things. There's lots of different things that could be part of an essay, so make sure that you mention them in your plan, because otherwise you then might forget them.

**KAREN FOLEY:** The other important aspect of our title "structuring," why is that important here?

**ISABELLA HENMAN:** Well, structure's important because it actually goes into your story, and it's actually the road map of what you're going to do to answer your question. We've already discussed whether it's an actual question or just a concept. But that's fine.

So you need to actually have a map. If you were going to drive somewhere, you need to have an idea about how you're going to get there. So in your plan and your structure, it needs to say, how are you going to get there? What are the stages that you're going to meet to get there?

So what are your different paragraphs going to include? What's your introduction going to say? What's your conclusion going to say? Obviously you don't have to go into more detail at the planning stage, but you have to have an idea that you're going to have them there to make sure that you know what you've got to get by the end. Does that makes sense?

**KAREN FOLEY:** So where do the students fit in, I mean, in terms of the workshop aspect of this?

**ISABELLA HENMAN:** Well, I would say it's about the brainstorming, and it's about the taking past experiences. But then actually it doesn't matter whether you know the information to answer a question. I would say approaching any essay is the same, and it's breaking down the question and planning how you would do that.

So what I often say to students, the ones that phone me up and go, help, I really don't know what I'm doing. OK, how could you answer this question? What kind of information do you need to find out? Again, taking our topic thing, in order to answer about planning and structuring, I need to know what a plan is. I need to know what a structure is.

If I don't know, I've got to go and find out. So that's basically what you do. So in an essay, you've got to look at your title. I don't know this. This is a word I don't know. I'm going to have to define it. I'm going to have to find out what it says.

This is a concept I don't know. This is an argument. This is a person. This is a play. This is a scientific thing. This is a maths formula, anything. I'm going to have to find that out, and it's going to have to come up somewhere.

So I'm going to have to find that out. I'm going to have to answer that. And then I'm going to have to weave it into my story to answer my overall question.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So in a sense, it's almost using students as a sounding board, with, well, this is the evidence I want to use. How does that answer the question?

**ISABELLA HENMAN:** Yeah. And if I've said this to you, does that really make sense? How would you go about it? If I said this to you, what does that mean to you? Because the good thing will be students from different disciplines will have a very different way.

Some people are very visual learners and will just put all sorts of words on the page, or they'll draw different diagrams. Other people like to have a list. It's fine anything, whichever works for you. But actually, sometimes it's really nice seeing, wow, that's a really nice technique. I would never have thought of that. That really helps me, so learning from different people.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And in terms of what students should expect, then, from the second session, what should they expect, and is it really important that they came to the first session?

**ISABELLA**

They don't need to have to come to the first. But it would be really good if they could, because then at least they've got the starting, the unpacking the question. But what we're hoping to do is give you some information about different types of plans and how you could go about planning and then a bit of an idea about the structure, some of the basic structures of essays. And we'll do some brainstorming.

We'll do the learning from each other about experiences that have worked, things that haven't worked. That's always very important to recognise it's not always going to work. What works for one person doesn't work for somebody else. And actually saying, I did this. Didn't really work. Maybe you learn from mistake. Don't waste your time doing that.

**KAREN FOLEY:**

I'm looking forward to it. Let's get going.