

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



Margaret Greenhall is a study skills specialist. She has applied the same skills as you'll use in writing essays to write a book. She tutors on science level 1 courses. Her hobbies are rowing and Lego.



Amanda Smith is a tutor of law modules at levels 1 and 2 law modules. She writes literature reviews for research papers – which are just really long essays! Out of the office, she is a ballroom dancer.

# Workshop

- This is going to be a structured workshop to help you get thinking your essay writing skills
- There is a lot of interaction so please be ready to answer polls (questions) or add to chat pod during the session
- You'll get the chance to discuss further and ask additional questions at the end

## Session purpose

- **Is for:**
- Covering some ideas on essay writing
- Give some guidance about ways to improve your essays
- Provide a space to share ideas and connect with other students
- **Is not for:**
- Telling you what you HAVE to do
- Providing module specific advice

# Inclusivity

- We welcome all students at our workshops. Please do be aware that they can be very busy and some students may struggle with the non scripted nature. Slides are available to download within the live session and from the event page on the studenthublive website to follow along or prepare for what will come up.

## Please be aware

- These sessions are large scale
- They are very busy
- There is lots of interaction
- They are not the same as other tutorials
- You can maximise slides on your own screen by clicking the icon



# Please

- Do NOT share any personal information in the chat pod during the session
- On the recording names will be anonymised to user number
- However if you type anyone's full name or any other personal information in the chat pod it can be seen by everybody and it would also show up on the recording

## Initial poll

What is your main reason for coming along to this session? Please choose the option that fits for you today:

- Study skills for current module(s)
- Study skills for future module (s)
- Connecting with other students
- Gain new ideas
- Responding to suggestion from tutor
- Recommendation from SST/Library
- Curious about what studenthublive is

# Introduction to Essay Writing





## This was our advert...

This workshop for Access and Level 1 students or those writing essays for the first time (or the first time in years!) covers the basics of drafting and editing essays. We will focus on how to prepare an essay plan, using each reference effectively. The workshop will introduce tone of voice, writing objectively, and how to differentiate between evidence taken from the module materials and your own ideas when answering an essay question. It is helpful (but not essential) to attend or watch the essay planning workshops before attending.

# What do you want to learn?

Using the short answer poll provided please say what you are hoping to learn from today's session

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



# Hopefully!

- We'll cover ideas to address many of these issues
- Remember your own module assessment guide as well as the studenthome help and the library
- Quick guide to Harvard / cite them right  
<https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/quick-guide-to-harvard-referencing-cite-them-right>

# Planning recap

- Most of the work in writing an essay is spent making the plan
- Excellent essays are planned so you know what you are going to do and can then know how to achieve that
- Any plan needs to have enough information for you to know what is included in each part of the essay
- A plan is a recipe for what you intend to do
- Best cure for writer's block

# Essay planning stages

- Analyse the question
- Plan the information search
- Plan the essay writing
- Plan your time

# First thoughts word cloud

- Using the option to type in where it says enter word here say  
**How do you feel about writing your essay?**
- Note that these need to be single words rather than phrases, if you press the space button your first word will go through

Enter word here

# Poll time

What's the purpose of an essay?

# What's the purpose of an essay?

- To assess your skills at reading and analysing large volumes of material
- To check your understanding of a topic
- To show your ability to communicate complex ideas
- To grade you relative to the learning outcomes



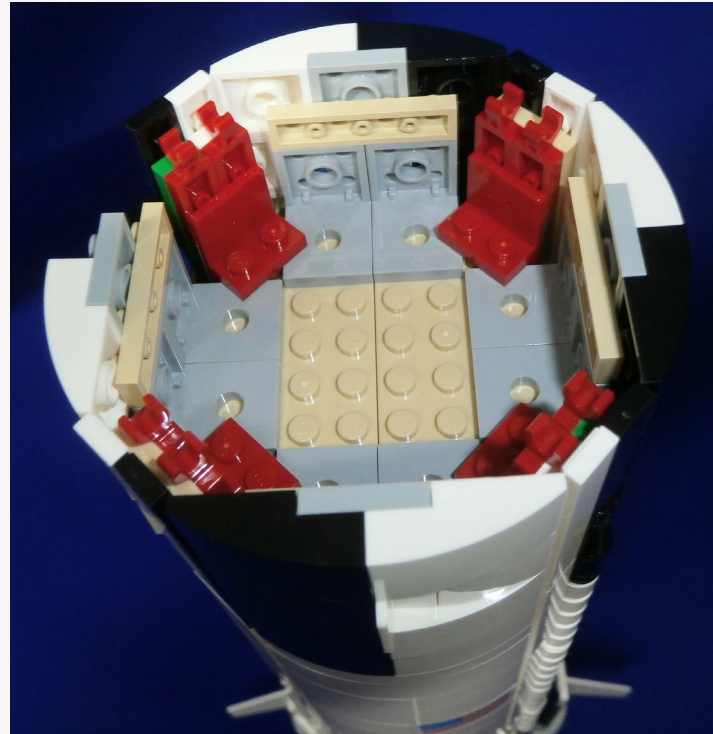
# Essay writing stages

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# Essay writing stages



# Poll

- What are the stages you need to go through to write an excellent essay?

# Essay writing stages

- Analyse question – process/topic/criteria
- Plan research
- Research
- Return to question
- List of points
- Plan – evaluate, prioritise
- Write draft – no one else will see it yet
- Order of writing doesn't have to be order of reading
- Edit – does it answer the question
- Check – Flow, proofread

# Essay parts

- Introduction 10 -15%
- Paragraphs 75 - 80%
- Conclusion 10%
- References

# Source material poll

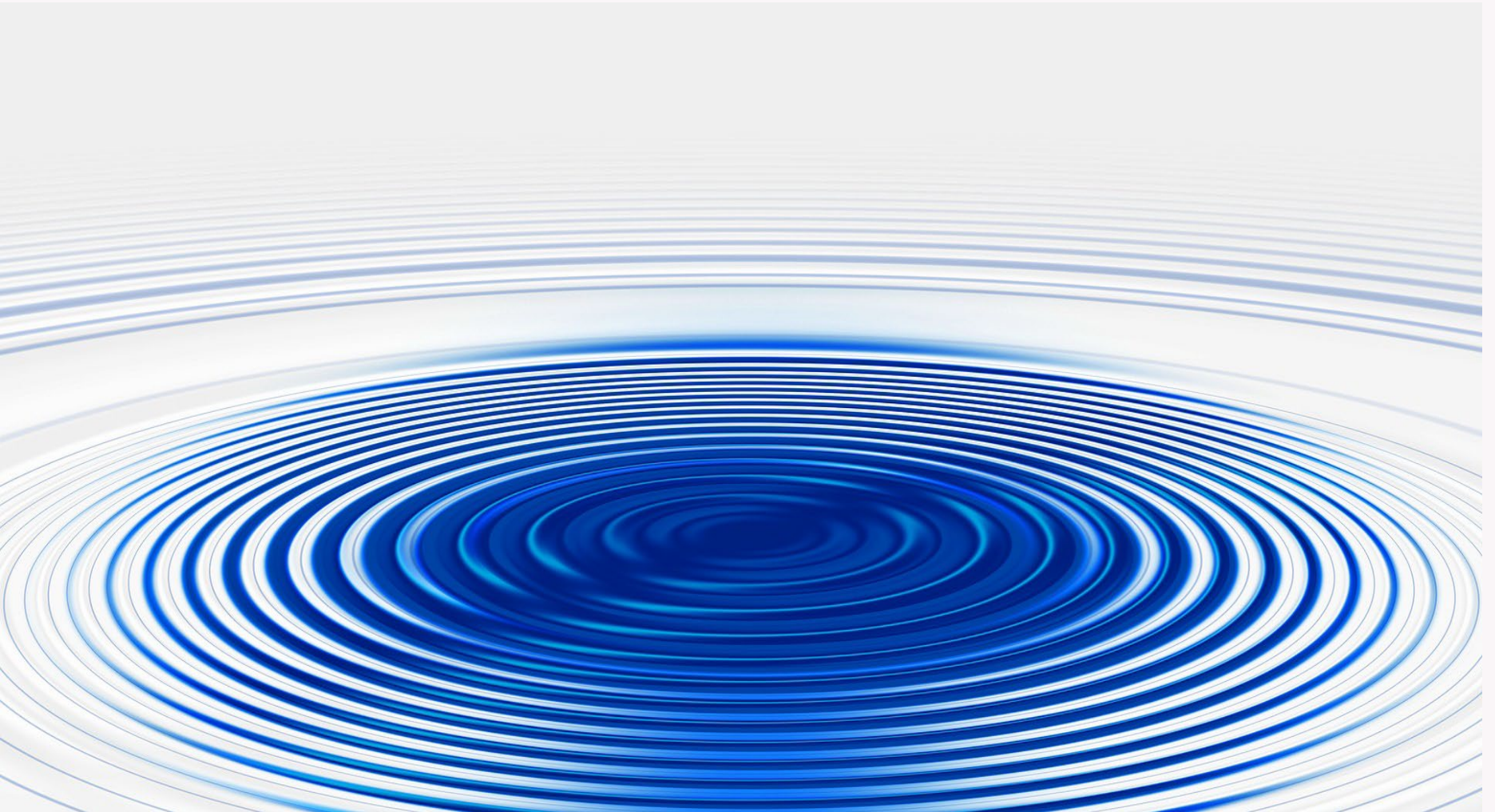
- What things do you use as source materials for your course?

# Primary sources/references

- **Primary – Original data**
- First person experience of the material eg:
  - laws
  - physical artifacts from the time
  - research paper written by people who did research
  - research thesis
  - usually first appearance of information



# Sources/references





# Secondary sources/references

- **Secondary – used the original data**
- Have seen or heard the primary sources
- Citation of a paper within another paper
- Commentary on primary sources



# Tertiary sources/references

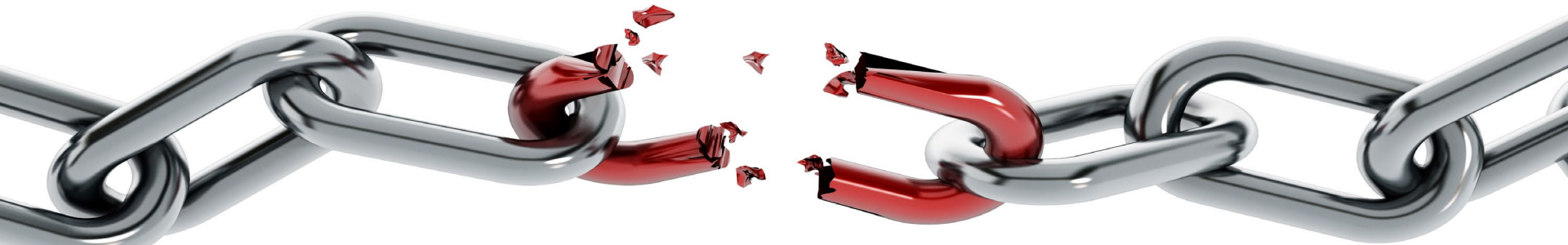
- **Tertiary – used the secondary sources**
- Have NOT seen or heard the primary sources
- Not usually credited to particular authors
- Reviews
- Newspapers
- Books/websites
- Dictionary/Encyclopaedia

# Non-confirmed sources/references

- **Hearsay/Gossip – Have not used the sources**
- Have NOT seen or heard sources
- Uncredited internet sites
- Presentations
- Books
- Opinions

# Types of sources/references

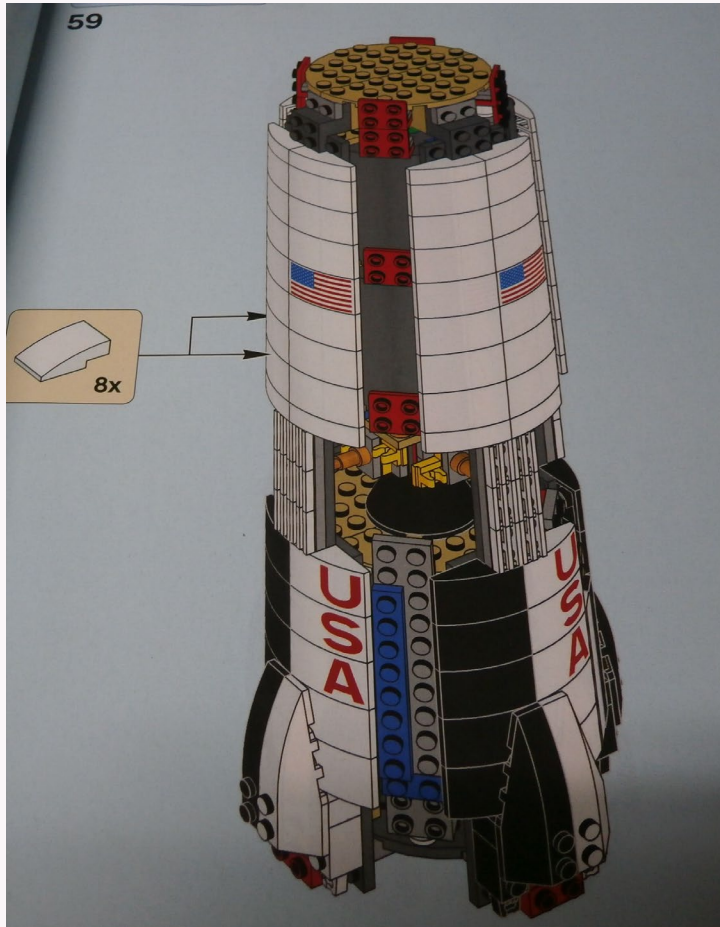
- **Hearsay/Gossip – not used sources**
- Assumed to be general knowledge
- Not necessarily wrong but the chain is broken



# Same source - different levels

- Literature review in a thesis
- Background information in the thesis introduction (not referenced)
- The research the thesis author did

# Same project different sources



# Poll

- How do you use your source materials to choose your content?

# Planning your research

- Make a list of all the sources
- Identify what level they are likely to be
- Go through them all at high speed – 2 to 4 seconds per page
- Prioritise them
- Leave it at least 24 hours
- Read individual sources
- Keep records as you read



# Keeping good notes

Essay title

Date due

Date	Topic notes	Main point	In text citation	Full reference	URL

# PROMPT

- Presentation
  - Relevance
  - Objectivity
  - Method
  - Provenance
  - Timeliness
- 
- <https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/advanced-evaluation-using-prompt>

# Using PEEL to write paragraphs

- PEEL
  - Point – make it in first sentence
  - Evidence – support it with facts
  - Explain – why the evidence is supportive and why is it relevant
  - (Link – link the paragraph to the next section and/or question gives flow to essay)

# Procrastination

- What do you do that stops you writing your essay?
- What ideas do you have for making sure you work effectively?

# Getting started

- Control your environment
- Go for the low hanging fruit
- I'll just do 5 minutes
- Remember no one else will ever read it
- You need to be in it to win it

# Extra details make the difference



# Poll

- How do you learn a new skill?
- How can you apply this to learning to write essays in the right way?

# Tone of voice

- Most essays are written in the third person
- You are writing, in your own words, about things that other people say and you are using your own academic knowledge to decide what to include and why it is relevant
- You are not, **unless specified**, writing about your opinion, experiences or perspectives
- It is better to be clear than to forthwith and henceforth confuse and confuddle your reader with lots of sophisticated words that are entirely unnecessary



# Identifying opinions

- Sometimes obvious due to words I, we or emotive language
- Is there a citation?
- Does the point make sense for the contexts?
- Always go back to PEEL

# Writing in your own words

- Plagiarism software looks at course materials and web
- Just removing a few words is not acceptable
- Leave time between reading and writing
- It's OK to use the same word if it's the best one just not every time
- Use thesauruses <https://www.thesaurus.com/>
- Why – it's the way you show you've understood the material

# Your synthesis



# Editing

- Leave it at least 24 hours after writing
- Make it a separate process to spell/grammar checking
- Does it help answer the question?
- Does it flow?
- Has each point got evidence and an explanation?
- Word count?
- If I was reading this what mark would I give it?

## Discussion activity (poll)

- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further
- ***I am successful at writing when...***
- ***I am going to explore my essay writing further by...***
- You are welcome to add your thoughts and we will then pick up some of the themes and talk through them
- Chat does have names on but the recording will be anonymised so you will appear as 'user number'

# Take home message

- Essay writing is a staged process
- Most of the work is hidden
- Take it one step at a time
- The final order doesn't have to be the order you write
- Do something – procrastination is a route to poor marks



# Feedback please

Please use the following link to provide feedback to help the studenthublive team to continue to improve what we do

<https://forms.office.com/e/rB2UDX3mWX>

# Final polls

What do you feel are the main things you will take away from this session?

- Better understanding of today's topic
- Better understanding of the place of study skills within university study
- Enthusiasm for my studies
- Enthusiasm for my skills development
- Feel part of the university community

How can SHL help you even more in the future?

Please leave your suggestion in the free text poll.

We are using the new Adobe Connect version with a different audio set up before you enter the room— was this:

- Very good
- Good
- Neither good nor bad
- Bad
- Very bad

**More feedback please send to [studenthub@open.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@open.ac.uk)**



# Upcoming sessions

7<sup>th</sup> Mar 7pm Developing Essay Writing

14<sup>th</sup> Mar 7pm Mastering Essay Writing

21<sup>st</sup> Mar 11 am Beginners Critical Thinking

**22<sup>nd</sup> March 11am Studying with neurodiversity**

28<sup>th</sup> Mar 11 am Intermediate Critical Thinking

4<sup>th</sup> Apr 1 am Advanced Critical Thinking

11<sup>th</sup> Apr 7pm Managing your Time

Details, booking information and subscribe  
for events at <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

Past student hub live online study skills sessions

[https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/eventlist\\_catchup](https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/eventlist_catchup)

Send us feedback at [studenthub@open.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@open.ac.uk)