**LANG1062: Introduction to language and communication**

**Essay writing presentation**

**Slide 1: Introduction**

This is a presentation on essay writing which is the second assessment for this course. Your instructor expects that you demonstrate particular conventions in the essay that you produce in order to obtain good grades. It is hoped that this essay writing presentation will help you write a high quality essay. There are also some links to resources that you may help you with the task.

**Slide 2: Copyright notice**

**Slide 3: Overview**

This presentation will cover the aspects identified on the slide. These are all components that you need to be aware of and incorporate in your essay for this course.

**Slide 4: The task**

The essay that you have been asked to produce for Assessment 2 is an argumentative essay. An argumentative essay is different from a descriptive essay. For an argumentative essay, you are expected to be critical in selecting the evidence to support your arguments. You have to demonstrate your reasoning and analytical skills to convince the reader about your proposition or stand. The word limit for the essay is 1500 words. Please check the due date on your course outline. This essay comprises 35% of your total grades for the course. 35% is a lot of marks so it is important that you start early and put in the effort to produce a good essay. You will have to choose one of the topics that is presented in the ‘Essay’ page of your Learnonline course site and write your essay.

**Slide 5: Interpreting topic 1 (Example)**

The first thing you have to do, is interpret the topic. This is an important process that you need to focus on. It is really pertinent that you read the topic and understand what is required so that you can address it in the best possible manner. If you do not understand the topic, do speak to your instructor. Spending time on this aspect of the task will ultimately save you a lot of time in the future. Once you have understood the topic, it will be a good idea to highlight all the key words and phrases.

On this slide you can see an example of what interpreting the topic means. Be critical when you interpret the topic. Ask the ‘what, when, why, where, who and how’ questions. This will help you when you begin your reading on the topic. Click on the link provided to find out more about understanding assignments. Do not rush off to locate sources for your essay before you truly understand the topic. Often students find that they have wasted a lot of time reading material that is in no way useful for their essay.

**Slide 6: Processes for writing your essay**

It is important that you initially read widely about the topic to gain an understanding. Then you have to practise your critical thinking skills to interpret and analyse the debates. Use your reasoning skills here. Do all the scholars agree with the topic? Are there those who disagree? What are they saying? Why are they saying that? What is the evidence? Are you convinced with the evidence? Are the findings applicable in your context? etc. Once you have you have done this, you will be clearer about your stand or proposition. Do you agree with the topic or do you disagree? Once you have decided on your stand, then you need to do another round of selective reading. This time you need to identify the issues that you are going to address in the essay. It will be a good idea to select 3 or 4 issues and discuss them in detail rather than superficially discuss 8 or 9 issues. Once you have decided on the issues you have selected, you have to read critically to find evidence to support your arguments. You have to provide at least 2 to 3 references for each of the issues you discuss. Make sure that the references you use are from credible sources.

You can now begin drafting your essay. Try to tell a logical story about the topic. Do not discuss more than one issue at a time. That way you will do a detailed analysis of that issue. Support your discussion with evidence. Do not only highlight all the evidence that supports your arguments. An objective writer also presents findings that do not support the topic. Don’t just leave it at that. Explain and interpret what this means to your discussion. If you do this, you will be given marks for demonstrating critical thinking. It is also important to paraphrase and summarise the evidence as much as possible to show your instructor that you have understood what you have read and can restate it in your own words. Only quote when you think it is absolutely important to your discussion. Keep quoting to a minimum.

Even good writers revise their draft a few times in order to produce high quality writing. Remember that you will not be able to produce a good essay at the first go. It will take constant revisions until you have a final copy. Proofreading and editing is another important aspect of your essay writing. An essay that is filled with errors whether typos, grammar or spelling will suggest to your instructor that you have not put in the effort required to produce your essay.

**Slide 7: Descriptive vs critical**

For this assessment task you are required to demonstrate critical thinking in your writing. There is a difference between critical thinking and descriptive writing. On this slide you will see how they differ. If you mainly define, describe summarise and provide examples, then you would be practising descriptive writing. If you produce descriptive writing for this essay, you will not obtain high marks. Instead, try to demonstrate that you are practising critical thinking in your writing. Analyse the topic and the debates in the area about the topic. Compare and contrast the debates and findings. Try to critique the shortcomings or weaknesses in existing research. Evaluate and examine the evidence that you are using in the essay. Interpret and explain your evidence and use only evidence that supports your discussion and argument. Wherever possible do demonstrate that you are being critical.

**Slide 8: The essay structure**

The essay for your assessment should be structured with an introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction is approximately 10% of the total word count. You generally have to introduce the reader to the topic and highlight one or two related key issues. You then have to present your thesis statement which is your proposition or stand. Next you have to specify what the aim of the essay is by identifying the issues that you would discuss in this essay. This is called setting parameters in that you limit the number of issues that you would be discussing in the essay. It would not be wise to just repeat the essay question as essay questions are rather broad and you cannot possibly answer everything associated with it and produce a substantial argument. Rather, you should indicate the aspects that you will be focussing in your discussion. You would then provide the scope of your essay. This typically tells the reader how the discussion will be organised in your essay. The scope can be used as an outline for your essay.

The body section of the essay is made up of 80% of your total word count. This is where a significant proportion of your marks are awarded, therefore, you need to present a logical and coherent argument. The body section of the essay should be divided into different paragraphs. Each paragraph should typically have a topic sentence which would be expanded with supporting statements. You then have to demonstrate your critical thinking and provide examples wherever possible to show that you can relate the concepts to actual contexts. This is where you would highlight the aspects identified in the earlier slide.

Finally, you have to write the conclusion for your essay which is approximately 10% of the essay. The conclusion brings together and wraps up the whole discussion. In the conclusion, you have to restate the thesis statement which is the main message of the essay. This is because you would be writing a substantial discussion about the topic and the reader may forget what the thesis statement is and you have to remind them. You would also have to recap the key points raised in the body section of your essay. Try not to just repeat what you had said earlier but interpret what this means to your discussion. Then conclude your discussion with a concluding statement that is related to the topic. This could be suggestions for future research, implications for your discipline or simply just a thought provoking statement. It must be emphasised here that if you just describe the key ideas associated with the topic, you will not be awarded good grades. In order for you to obtain high marks, you need to discuss the issues in detail.

**Slide 9: Essay structure: Introduction (example)**

On this slide you can see an example of the introduction section of an essay. Notice how each of the elements identified in the previous slide about the introduction is presented in the example. You do not have to produce an exact version as you can be creative in coming up with your own introduction. The example has been provided to show you what your instructor’s expectations are. If you can capture most of the elements of an introduction in your own essay, then your instructor would be happy.

**Slide 10: Essay structure: Body (example)**

On this slide you can see an example of the body section of the essay. Please remember that this is an example and comprises only a short paragraph. It does not demonstrate aspects of critical thinking that was highlighted in Slide 7. Your body paragraphs should be more substantial.

**Slide 11: Essay structure: Conclusion (example)**

On this slide you are provided with an example of the conclusion section of your essay. Once again, this is only an example and thus does not show you all the details presented in Slide 8. This example has been provided so that you get an idea of what a conclusion should look like. Do avoid ending your essay abruptly without bringing all your arguments and discussion together.

**Slide 12: Integrating evidence in your essay**

Referencing is an important aspect of academic writing. In order to make your arguments more credible, it is important to provide evidence from the experts and scholars who have researched widely in the area that you are addressing. Referencing also plays other important roles in writing. It shows your instructor that you have been reading widely and critically. Citing your sources highlights that you have analysed the debates and discussions in the field and have selected appropriate evidence to support your own arguments. By referencing, you also demonstrate that you can engage and contribute to the debates of your discipline. It is an expected practice in the university that when you borrow or use other people’s ideas, you acknowledge them in your writing.

Referencing or integrating evidence in your writing will depend on what message you want to communicate. You can give the author of your source prominence by placing the reference at the start of the sentence. This is usually done when the writer wants to draw the reader’s attention to the authority who specified an idea. Sometimes who said something is less important than what was said. In this instance, you would draw the reader’s attention to the subject and not the author. Here you will place the citation at the end of a sentence giving the information, prominence. There are no rules as to when you should give the author or information prominence. This is for you to decide. What you need to remember though is to integrate evidence to support your arguments and acknowledge the source of the information.

**Slide 13: Different ways of integrating evidence**

On this slide, you can see three different ways of integrating evidence in your writing. Examples have been provided for the different forms. You would be quoting if you copy word for word from the original source. The words you copy should be encased in single quotation marks as suggested by the UniSA Harvard referencing convention and the page number should also be included. When you paraphrase something, you restate the idea in your own words. Usually the page number is not needed when you paraphrase a general idea. However, when you paraphrase a specific idea, theory, concept or statistic from a particular author, then it is appropriate that you provide the page number. If you are not sure as to whether or not to provide the page number when you paraphrase, you can go ahead and do so as you will not be penalised. It will also be a good idea to confirm this with your instructor if you are in doubt. When you summarise information from your sources, you condense and synthesise the main ideas. You are not required to provide the page number when you integrate evidence through this method. Please access more information on referencing from the link provided on the slide.

**Slide 14: Paraphrase and summarise**

As far as possible try to paraphrase and summarise the evidence that you use in your writing. This will show your instructor that you have understood the debates and discussions in the area that you are addressing. Paraphrasing and summarising do not just mean changing one or two words from the original. Look at the diagram provided and try to follow the steps highlighted in order to write better paraphrases and summaries. Do access the link provided for a more comprehensive resource on these elements.

**Slide 15: Reporting verbs**

There are many reporting verbs that can help you communicate the message that you want. On this slide, you can see a few. These reporting verbs have been identified with the strength they communicate. The right reporting verb can create the impact that you want on the reader.

**Slide 16: Resources for essay writing**

On this slide you can see some links to resources that may help with writing your essay. Do access all the resources identified in this presentation before you begin your actual writing.