Essay Writing Checklist

Essay title: Have you answered the question? Make sure that you understand what is required by identifying the approach words in the title (see ‘Approach words’ helpguide). Think about what you are being asked to demonstrate and discuss it with colleagues on your course.

Introduction: Does your introduction make it clear that you have understood the question? Briefly outline the ideas, information and arguments that you are going to consider and give reasons why you are including them.

Structure: Are your ideas presented in a logical structure? Does each paragraph deal with one idea at a time? Remember to use linking words and phrases to ensure your paragraphs follow on from each other.

Style: Have you written your essay in a formal style without using slang, contractions or emotive language? Have you written in the third person?

Evidence: The main points of your argument should be supported with evidence. Have you distinguished your ideas from the ideas of others by referencing?

Conclusion: Does your conclusion summarise the main points in the body of your essay? Make sure that you refer back to the essay title to demonstrate to your reader how you have answered the question.

Reference list: Are your citations and reference list accurate and do they conform to your departmental guidelines?

Bibliography: If your department requires you to provide a bibliography – is it complete and presented accurately?

Spelling, grammar and punctuation: Proof-read your essay carefully to check that your spelling, grammar and punctuation are correct. Try to keep your sentences short and focused.

Word count: Does your essay meet the word count? You can check this in Microsoft Word from the Tools menu.

Presentation: Check your departmental guidelines to find out whether you need to present your work in a particular font, line spacing or margin size.