

## **Section 6**

### **Essay Writing Skills**

#### **Introduction**

This section will look at how to develop essay writing skills, and will end with an explanation of the marking system used within the School for Policy Studies. We will be looking at:

1. University requirements
2. Time management when writing an essay
3. Planning the structure of an essay
4. Getting started: writer's block
5. Common concerns in essay writing and how to avoid them
6. Writing style – including 'Mind your language' and how to avoid using sexist, racist and disablist language in your work
7. Proof-reading your work
8. Marking essays

#### **Expectations**

There are certain expectations concerning presentation that you should take into account when writing essays.

Your essays should be typed, in 12 pt font, with 1.5 or double line spacing. This makes the essay easier to read and gives space for feedback comments to be written on the essay. Essays should be printed on one side of the paper only, and page numbers should be used. You should use your candidate number, rather than your name, when submitting assessed work for marking – the essays are 'blind-marked', ie the lecturer does not know who has written them, so there is no potential for bias or favouritism. You should always hand in two copies of your work, and always keep a copy for yourself, either on disk, on paper or both.

A commonly-asked question is whether students must write in the first or third person (that is, for example, writing ‘I will discuss ...’ or writing ‘Several issues will be discussed...’). There is no hard and fast rule within the University: different lecturers advocate different styles, and the style may be influenced by the subject matter. For example, research report might be best written in the third person but more reflexive work may necessitate writing in the first person. Whichever style you choose, it is important to be consistent and to remember that you are aiming to write as a ‘professional’ academic.

## **Time Management and Essay Writing**

The production of a completed essay involves the development and use of many different skills, as reflected in the sections that this manual has already covered. For example, you must read from different sources, take notes in lectures, from books and journals, and learn to reference accurately. When writing an essay all of these are brought together, alongside skills such as planning an essay, and dealing with common problems associated with writing.

In bringing together all of these skills, you clearly need to be organised and plan your time well. When you are writing essays for this course, it is likely you will still be preparing seminar presentations and reading for tutorials and seminars. It is also likely that you will be writing or at least thinking about other essays as well. For this reason do not leave writing essays until the last minute! If you do, however much reading and note-taking you have done, you will not be able to do yourself justice. In addition, the libraries have limited resources and other people, not only those on your course, may have the books you need. It is therefore a good idea to look at essay questions and reading lists as soon as possible and to plan how you are going to obtain the resources that you need. If you work on essays steadily and consistently, you will find that you have enough time left for a crucial aspect of essay writing that is often overlooked: proof-reading, editing and redrafting.

You need to be realistic but also fair to yourself. Do not under-estimate the time it will take to find and read the resource material, to write, re-write and edit your essay,

but remember that you will need to have breaks from your work and that other events (such as birthdays, family celebrations, Christmas, and so on) are also important!

### **Time Management**

- Do not leave essay writing until the last minute – make a reasonable time plan that takes account of the other work you need to do and other events that may prevent you working
- Plan early: look at the resources you will need and access these in plenty of time
- Leave time in your plan to proof-read and edit your essay

## **Planning the Structure of an Essay**

A key skill in writing essays is the ability to create a sound structure or framework through which you will develop your argument. A principle danger in essay writing is the temptation to include all of the information that you know about a topic, rather than answering the question that has actually been asked. A well-developed framework helps to ensure that you are answering the question and are using the material that you have gathered to analyse the issues rather than to simply describe them. It will also help you to adhere to the word limit set for the piece of work.

Creating a framework will help you to organise your reading for the essay. Developing a framework will help you focus your reading, by sorting out the relevant reading from that which can be left out, and by highlighting areas where your knowledge is sketchy and where you need to do more reading.

It can be helpful to think of an essay as comprising:

- a) the introduction

- b) the thesis (the argument that you are putting forward)
- c) the anti-thesis (the arguments against the one you favour)
- d) the synthesis (the conclusion)

A good introduction is absolutely essential for a good essay. Here you will explain why the topic is important, briefly outline the argument that you will present in your essay, and what you will discuss in order to effectively argue this. Use this section to explain any definitions of the central concepts that you are using.

Similarly, a good conclusion is also essential to a good essay. Avoid the temptation (particularly if time is running short) to skimp on a conclusion, or simply to restate your argument. In this section, you must say whether and how the evidence that you have presented has supported your argument, and how, if at all, it falls short. When you have worked for a long time on an essay question - reading, note-taking and writing - all of this can seem as if it is self-evident in what you have written. However, often it is not, and an essay needs a good conclusion to bring it all together. You should spend as much time on the introduction and conclusion as you do on the rest of the essay.

It is worth noting that: “If you cannot write a final paragraph that both summarises the material and answers the question, then you have probably wandered off the point somewhere” (King, 2002).

In order to plan your essay structure, you will need to:

1. Think very carefully about the question that you have chosen. Think about what it is that the question is asking you to do: ‘Discuss’, ‘Analyse’, ‘Consider’, ‘Compare’ and so on, highlight the key words and make sure you do what the question asks. If you are asked, for example, to ‘compare three areas of law...’ make sure that you do use three areas of law, not two or four, and that you actually draw comparisons between these areas, and that you do not just describe each in turn. It cannot be repeated enough that it is crucial that you answer the question properly.

2. Think about your overall 'argument' – what it is that you will try to say with this essay. You need to have a specific 'argument', rather than just describing everything that you know about a topic. The argument is the backbone of the essay and is what helps make your essay critical. You need to have strong supporting evidence for your argument, and to refer to it in your introduction, main body of the essay, and in the conclusion.
3. Decide on the 'core issues' of the argument, which will have emerged from your lectures and your reading on the subject. These will include those issues which do not necessarily agree with your argument, but which need to be discussed and assessed. Write a sentence outlining each issue on a piece of paper.
4. These issues will become sections of your essay.
5. Underneath these section headings, write the points that you wish to make about them.
6. Underneath these points, note a couple of words to indicate what the content of each of these points will be.
7. When you have decided on all of the sections and what they will contain, you can allocate approximately how many words you can use for each section. If you have settled on discussing 6 key issues, with the introduction and conclusion, you will have 8 sections. If each issue is equally important, in a 2,500 word essay you will have about 300 words for each. Breaking down the essay word count can help the task of writing the essay feel more manageable, and indicates how prudent you will have to be with your words – there is no room for waffle! Conversely, feeling that you could not write 300 words on one particular section tells you that you need to do some more reading in that area.
8. You can now approach writing each section of your essay as a separate section, but take care when bringing your essay together that you have a logical order to these sections, and that you have linked them up. You can of course change the order of the sections as you go if a better order suggests itself as you work.

### Exercise: Planning an essay

Here is an example of an essay question. It is not a problem if this is not your field – the exercise is designed to help think about the stages needed in planning an essay, not what you know about the subject. Look at the question and try to plan what might be included in an answer to it:

Is there such a thing as 'good enough parenting'? Discuss in relation to parenting across cultures.

1. Pick out key words in the question. What concepts might you have to define in the introduction?
2. What would we think about and add in first?
3. What kinds of evidence would be included and discussed?
4. Introduction – what points to include here?
5. What might you say in the body of the essay?
6. Conclusion – what points will be included here?

### **Getting started: writer's block**

Even when you have a beautifully crafted set of notes, all accurately referenced and relevant to the question in hand, actually writing the first sentence of an essay can be very difficult. If you are suffering from writer's block, producing a plan as outlined above should help. This breaks the task down into more manageable short 'essays'.

However, you still have to write the first sentence for each of these! Hopefully, if you are having trouble starting, this section should help.

It can be helpful when faced with a blank sheet of paper to get started by simply writing something, even if it is not a fully-formed sentence. You should accept that what you write first will not be particularly good and will need to be revised. This takes away the pressure to write a perfect first sentence. Begin by just writing your way into the topic. For example:

‘Good enough parenting is a culturally defined phenomenon that means different things at different times – eg different child-rearing practices’

Although this is not what would appear in the final version of your essay, it is a way of getting some thoughts down onto paper. Other strategies include:

- Not substituting more note-taking for writing. Set a limit on the time you will spend note-taking and don't let this encroach on writing time.
- Not thinking about who is going to judge the piece and how they are going to judge it. While it is good to bear in mind the criteria that you have to meet in order to have produced an essay worthy of a first or upper second, sometimes thinking about this stage can stop us getting 'pen to paper'.
- Writing down different possibilities for opening sentences, and paragraphs. Again this removes the feeling that the first thing you write needs to be brilliant.
- Talking about the topic of the essay with other people can re-fire enthusiasm for the subject and may help with getting started on writing about it, so chat to your colleagues about it.
- Dictating what you want to say into a tape recorder. Although this will need redrafting into a good essay style and structure, it may help to get ideas flowing.
- Writing other parts of the essay first. You don't have to write the essay as it will be read, introduction first, conclusion last. If you are having difficulty

starting the essay, it can be easier to write the main sections first, before the introduction. You can add the introduction later.

- As long as you have time: take a break. Sometimes doing something else completely can mean you come back to the work feeling fresh.

(For further suggestions, see Murray 1984, Ward 1998).

## **Common Concerns**

There are a number of common questions that students ask about their essays, some of which it is useful to ask yourself as you are writing:

### *Have I answered the question?*

It always bears repeating that you must have strategies for ensuring that you are answering the question set, and that your writing is relevant to the question. Be sure to answer the question – marks are often lost where students write too generally, or have mis-read the question. An essay should be a coherent answer to the question – not a demonstration of everything that you know on the topic. This will mean that it is necessary to make decisions about what to include from your reading and what to leave out, in order to make the best case:

- Plan your essay carefully.
- At each stage of the argument, you should ask yourself ‘Is this relevant?’, ‘Am I answering the question’, ‘Does this relate directly to the subject that I have been asked to discuss?’.
- Make sure that each paragraph is discussing one point or issue, that this is clear in its opening sentence, and this is relevant to the question

(see: <http://www.mantex.co.uk/ou/a319/a319-13.htm> accessed 02/12/2002 13.33)

### *Does it matter that my argument doesn't agree with what my tutor said in class?*

This is not a problem as long as whatever point you are making is backed up with solid evidence and you have clearly referenced the source of the evidence. Tutors



may 'take a line' in class in order to stimulate discussion - writing essays is not as much about wrong or right answers as about your ability to defend your argument.

*The word limit for my essay is 2,500 words and I've written 4,000 – does this really matter?*

Word limits are set for a reason and you will be penalised if you write an essay that is too long or too short (see individual course handbooks for information on penalties). You should use an essay plan to carefully plan how long your essay is, and try to leave time in your time plan to edit any overlong or short essays. If your essay is too long it can be a sign that you are not confident about the argument you are developing, and the essay probably contains 'waffle' used to 'pad out' your argument. If the essay is too short you might not have included all of the relevant issues and you will need to do more reading.

*Can I use quotations?*

Yes, if you use them well. Using quotations be a mechanism to powerfully illustrate a point you that have made, or to highlight how a certain piece of evidence backs up your argument. However, overusing quotations can weaken the strength of your own argument, as you will merely be repeating what others have already said.

## **Writing Style**

As already mentioned, there is a debate as to whether you should write in the first or third person. Whilst there is no answer to this question, you should be aiming to write in a professional, academic style, which requires you to be alert to the following points:

*Colloquial language and Jargon*

To develop a professional style, you should not use colloquial (informal) language in essays. For example use 'teenage parents' or 'teenage mothers' rather than 'teenage mums and dads'. Similarly, you should avoid abbreviations (use 'do not' rather than 'don't', 'cannot' rather than 'can't' and so on) and slang.

However, you should also avoid using 'jargon' unnecessarily. Charles King (1998) cautions against using jargon to cover up a lack of reading, argument or evidence in an essay:

*The jargon-meister attempts to blind the reader with science. Using an array of [social science] terms - most of which he probably does not understand - he hopes to lull the reader into social science ecstasy. In such a state, the jargon-meister thinks, the professor will ignore the fact that the essay really says nothing at all.*

(King 1998).

Take care that when you use subject-specific terminology you use it in a considered way, and demonstrate that you understand its meaning.

#### *Posing questions*

In addition, avoid asking and then answering questions in your essay as a way of making a point. For example:

“Is smacking harmful to children? The evidence is contradictory....”

Posing questions and writing answers is more associated with journalists writing opinion pieces than academics writing essays and articles.

#### *Appropriate resources*

Reading and Note-taking have already been covered in this manual, but it is worth mentioning at this stage that it is not acceptable to quote from lecture notes in writing essays. You should use your lecture and seminar notes as a starting point for ideas and further reading, rather than citing from them directly. If there is a particular point from a lecture that you want to make in your essay, ask the lecturer where s/he found her/his information and then read the original source yourself. You might find that there is a lot more information in the original article that you could include in your essay, which the lecturer did not have time to cover in the lecture.

## Minding your language

It is very important within your essays to be careful that, unwittingly or otherwise, you are not using, sexist, racist or disablist language. As social scientists, we should be aware that language is very powerful as it structures and reinforces beliefs and prejudices, and we should avoid using certain expressions that may reproduce inaccurate stereotypes. It is also important to realise that language is also dynamic and the meanings and/or acceptability of words and phrases can change over time. There cannot therefore be an exhaustive list of acceptable or unacceptable words, but you must always be aware of the implicit meanings of terms that you use. The guidelines of the British Sociological Association (BSA) will help you to think about appropriate language, and are summarised below (the guidelines are available in full on the web at [www.britisoc.org.uk](http://www.britisoc.org.uk)).

### *Anti- Sexist Language*

When references to both sexes is intended, a large number of phrases use the word man or other masculine equivalents, or use the suffix 'man', thereby implicitly excluding women from the picture presented of the world. The BSA guidelines aim to help people avoid using sexist language by giving examples of some of the forms it takes and by suggesting anti-sexist alternatives. They will help you to consider the extent to which and the ways in which we either challenge or reproduce inaccurate, sexist and heterosexist assumptions.

#### **Some examples are:**

<i>Sexist</i>	<i>Non-sexist</i>
• Man in the street	- people in general, people;
• Layman	- lay person, non-expert;
• Man-hours	- work hours;
• Forefathers	- ancestors;
• Policeman/fireman	- police officer/fire-fighter

### *Anti- Racist Language*

Selecting terms to describe the ethnicity of different groups of people can be difficult, particularly as this is an area of language that continues to see many changes. For

example, the term African-Caribbean is gradually replacing the term Afro-Caribbean to refer to Caribbean peoples and those of Caribbean origin who are of African descent. The BSA guidelines highlight the problems of many terms that are commonly used, and suggest alternatives, for example using the term ‘minority ethnic groups’.

### *Non – Disablist Language*

The language you use should also avoid the perpetuation of assumptions about disabled people:

- The word disabled should not be used as a collective noun (for example as in ‘the disabled’)
- Avoid using medical labels as this may promote a view of disabled people as patients. It also implies the medical label is the over-riding characteristic of the person you are discussing, which is inappropriate.

<i>Some examples are:</i>	
<i>Disablist</i>	<i>Non-Disablist</i>
Handicap	Disability
Victim of	} Person who has/person with
Crippled by	
Suffering from	

### **Proof-reading and rewriting your work**

Attention to proof-reading and editing is often sacrificed due to time considerations, but, as mentioned earlier, it is important to set aside time within your time plan to edit, rewrite and proof-read your work.

### *Factual Errors*

Factual errors can really let your work down, so take every care to note dates, names and so on accurately, and to double-check them. Factual errors are often overlooked in proof-reading, as they are not immediately obvious to you, but they will be obvious to your reader.

### *Proof-reading*

You must also read over your work for spelling errors and grammatical errors, to check the structure of your essay, and to assess whether the argument is logical and coherent. You must also ensure that references are accurate where you have included them, and that they are included at all necessary points.

The best way to proof-read is to put aside a significant amount of time (two days is ideal) in your time plan, so that you can put the essay away, and don't look at it. You will return to your work with a 'fresh' pair of eyes, and will be more alert to your mistakes. If you try to proof-read as soon as you have finished the essay you will be both too tired and too 'close' to the work to spot mistakes; if you try to proof-read too close to the deadline you might not have enough time to make the necessary changes. Some people find it easier to proof-read a printed copy of their work, whilst others prefer to read it on the computer screen and edit mistakes as they see them. You will need to work out which suits you best. If you do use a computer or word-processor, learn how to use the spell-check facility, but be aware that some technical terms will not be recognised and that some computer programmes use American spellings.

Marks can be lost through seeing proof-reading as unnecessary; it is always worth making an effort to ensure the work that you hand in is of the highest possible standard.

Refer back to the points made earlier about presentation - line spacing, font size and so on. Be consistent in the way that you write dates, your use of double or single quotation marks, and so on. This can be distracting if not consistent (Ward 1998).

**Checks to make:**

- Are there any spelling mistakes?
- Are there any factual errors?
- Are the references accurate and complete?
- Are all factors such as page numbers in place?
- Have you the right number of final copies printed ready to be handed in?

## Marking Schedules

### Introduction

The marks given to essays are not arbitrarily decided and markers must follow a specific set of marking criteria. The criteria may vary depending on the course or the department but you should have a copy of your course guidelines.

### *Grading*

There are five different grades, which apply throughout your degree. The highest grade is known as 'first class', and is a score of 70% or higher. A fail is a score of 39 per cent or below.

Social Policy essays will be graded on the following scale:	
70+	First Class (1 <sup>st</sup> )
60-69	Upper Second Class (2:1)
50-59	Lower Second Class (2:2)
40-49	Third Class (3 <sup>rd</sup> )
35 – 39	Marginal Fail
0-34	Outright Fail

ECS essays will be graded on the following scale:	
70+	First Class (1 <sup>st</sup> )
60-69	Upper Second Class (2:1)
50-59	Lower Second Class (2:2)
40-49	Third Class (3 <sup>rd</sup> )
0-39	Outright Fail

Generally, when grading essays, the following will be taken into account:

1. The relevance of the answer to the question set
2. A clear introduction, the ability to structure an argument clearly and a conclusion.
3. The use of relevant reading;
4. The recognition, where appropriate, of different perspectives.
5. The avoidance of sexist and racist language.
6. Grammar, style and presentation, including accurate acknowledgement of sources in the Bibliography.

As noted, the guidelines that the markers follow may vary according to course, department and what year of study you are in. The following boxes contain information on the marking guidelines for first, second and third year essays. As you will see, the schedules are very similar but as you progress through your University career, the markers expect more in-depth knowledge of topics to be contained in your essays.

**The Marking Criteria for 1<sup>st</sup> Year Undergraduate Social Policy  
Unit and Assessed work:**

1 <sup>st</sup> (70+)	Shows excellent knowledge of the subject and presentational skills, use of a wide range of sources and recognition of alternative perspectives and viewpoints.
2:1 (60-69)	Shows good knowledge and understanding of the subject and demonstrated evidence of clear thinking. Good quality organisation, presentation and use of appropriate sources.
2:2 (50-59)	Shows reasonable understanding and knowledge of the subject and some ability to answer the question. Acceptable quality organisation, style of presentation and use of sources.
3 <sup>rd</sup> (40 - 49)	Shows a basic knowledge of the subject but limited understanding. Poor quality organisation and style of presentation, limited use of sources.
Marginal Fail 35-39	Shows minimal understanding of the subject and/or fails to address the question. Weaknesses in relation to the content, knowledge or structure. Inadequate presentation, use of sources and analytical skills.
Outright Fail 0-34	. Shows little or no knowledge of the subject and a serious misunderstanding. Very poor quality of presentation, no or irrelevant use of sources.



**Marking Criteria for Second Year Undergraduate Social Policy  
Unit and Assessed Work:**

1 <sup>st</sup> (70+)	Shows excellent knowledge of the subject, an ability to develop a critical argument and awareness of appropriate evidence. Shows capacity for original thought. High quality organisation and style of presentation.
2:1 (60-69)	Shows a good knowledge of the subject and evidence of clear thinking. Shows ability to construct an argument, including the use of evidence. Good quality organisation and style of presentation.
2:2 (50-59)	Shows a reasonable knowledge of the subject and an ability to construct an argument. Acceptable quality organisation and style of presentation.
3 <sup>rd</sup> (40 - 49)	Shows some knowledge of the subject, but restricted ability to construct an argument. Poor quality of presentation, but not to the extent that it obscures ability to judge other criteria.
Marginal Fail 35-39	Shows a minimal understanding of the subject and/or fails to address the question. Weaknesses in relation to content, knowledge or structure. Inadequate presentation, use of sources and analytical skills.
Outright Fail 0-34	Shows little or no knowledge of the subject, with a lack of understanding and/or serious misunderstanding. Unsuccessful or absent attempts to construct an argument, with no or irrelevant use of sources. Very poor quality of presentation.

**Marking Criteria for Third Year Undergraduate Social Policy  
Unit and Assessed Work:**

1 <sup>st</sup> (70+)	Shows excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject, in both breadth and depth, and demonstrates a capacity for intellectual initiative. Shows consistent ability to develop a critical argument, selecting, integrating and evaluating appropriate evidence from a range of sources. High quality organisation and style of presentation.
2:1 (60-69)	Shows good knowledge and understanding of subject, in both breadth and depth, and demonstrates evidence of clear thinking and good critical judgement. Consistent ability to develop a critical argument and use appropriate evidence. Good quality organisation and style of presentation.
2:2 (50-59)	Shows reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject and an ability to construct an argument with a reasonable level of internal consistency, but using evidence from a limited range of sources. Acceptable quality organisation and style of presentation.
3 <sup>rd</sup> (40 - 49)	Shows some basic knowledge and limited understanding of the subject. Demonstrates a restricted ability to construct an argument, with uncritical use of evidence. Poor quality organisation and style of presentation.
Marginal Fail 35-39	Shows minimal understanding of the subject and/or fails to address the question. Weaknesses in relation to content, knowledge or structure. Inadequate presentation, use of sources and analytical skills.
Outright Fail 0-34	Shows little or no knowledge of the subject, with a lack of understanding and/or serious misunderstanding. Unsuccessful or absent attempts to construct an argument, with no or irrelevant use of sources. Very poor quality of presentation.

NB: 'Presentation' includes spelling, punctuation, grammar and referencing.

**The Marking Criteria for 1<sup>st</sup> Year Undergraduate ECS  
Unit and Assessed work:**

1 <sup>st</sup> (70+)	Shows excellent knowledge of the subject and presentational skills, use of a wide range of sources and recognition of alternative perspectives and viewpoints.
2:1 (60-69)	Shows good knowledge and understanding of the subject and demonstrated evidence of clear thinking. Good quality organisation, presentation and use of appropriate sources.
2:2 (50-59)	Shows reasonable understanding and knowledge of the subject and some ability to answer the question. Acceptable quality organisation, style of presentation and use of sources.
3 <sup>rd</sup> (40 - 49)	Shows a basic knowledge of the subject but limited understanding. Poor quality organisation and style of presentation, limited use of sources.
Fail (0-39)	Shows little or no knowledge of the subject and a serious misunderstanding. Very poor quality of presentation, no or irrelevant use of sources.

**Marking Criteria for Second Year Undergraduate ECS  
Unit and Assessed Work:**

1 <sup>st</sup> (70+)	Shows excellent knowledge of the subject, an ability to develop a critical argument and awareness of appropriate evidence. Shows capacity for original thought. High quality organisation and style of presentation.
2:1 (60-69)	Shows a good knowledge of the subject and evidence of clear thinking. Shows ability to construct an argument, including the use of evidence. Good quality organisation and style of presentation.
2:2 (50-59)	Shows a reasonable knowledge of the subject and an ability to construct an argument. Acceptable quality organisation and style of presentation.
3 <sup>rd</sup> (40 - 49)	Shows some knowledge of the subject, but restricted ability to construct an argument. Poor quality of presentation, but not to the extent that it obscures ability to judge other criteria.
Fail 0-39	Shows little or no knowledge of the subject, with a lack of understanding and/or serious misunderstanding. Unsuccessful or absent attempts to construct an argument, with no or irrelevant use of sources. Very poor quality of presentation.

**Marking Criteria for Third Year Undergraduate ECS  
Unit and Assessed Work:**

1 <sup>st</sup> (70+)	Shows excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject, in both breadth and depth, and demonstrates a capacity for intellectual initiative. Shows consistent ability to develop a critical argument, selecting, integrating and evaluating appropriate evidence from a range of sources. High quality organisation and style of presentation.
2:1 (60-69)	Shows good knowledge and understanding of subject, in both breadth and depth, and demonstrates evidence of clear thinking and good critical judgement. Consistent ability to develop a critical argument and use appropriate evidence. Good quality organisation and style of presentation.
2:2 (50-59)	Shows reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject and an ability to construct an argument with a reasonable level of internal consistency, but using evidence from a limited range of sources. Acceptable quality organisation and style of presentation.
3 <sup>rd</sup> (40 - 49)	Shows some basic knowledge and limited understanding of the subject. Demonstrates a restricted ability to construct an argument, with uncritical use of evidence. Poor quality organisation and style of presentation.
Fail 0-39	Shows little or no knowledge of the subject, with a lack of understanding and/or serious misunderstanding. Unsuccessful or absent attempts to construct an argument, with no or irrelevant use of sources. Very poor quality of presentation.

These marking schedules should help you to construct your essay by indicating what sort of things the examiners are looking for.