



ESSAY WRITING STANDARD

A Guide for Students and Lecturers

(Updated December 2015)

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1: INTRODUCTION

Essay writing assignments are an important element of course assessment. They not only allow lecturers and professors to check if students have understood the material in a given course, but they also allow them to assess the students' critical thinking and analytical skills. More importantly, essays are a good way for students to learn about a given subject, and a good means for them to test their own investigative and diagnostic abilities.

There is no one way that an essay should be structured, and no one way that an argument should be presented. Essays, like novels, can be as long and convoluted as a Dostoyevsky epic, or as short and straightforward as a Hemingway novella, and still retain the same literary or academic value. Nevertheless, in order to train strong writers and successful researchers, Lazarski University has developed this "Essay Writing Standard" to be used by all students in all courses in its English-language programs.

The Standard is not intended to constrain the creativity of students, but rather to enforce basic habits such as proper citation, quotation, and paraphrasing, which are essential for good academic writing. Like in any trade, whether it be painting, carpentry, or architecture, once students master the basic rules and tools required to be good academics, they will be free to experiment and demonstrate their full creative abilities. But before they can do this, they must learn the fundamentals.

2: ESSAY FORMAT

As stated earlier, there is no set style for writing an essay. However, in order to ease the grading process, as well as to help students focus on the content of their essay without worrying about its format, Lazarski University has adopted uniform rules concerning title pages, font and line spacing, page numbers, bibliography, and citation, which are to be used by all students for all essay-writing assignments.

2.1 Title Page

All essays should have a precise title. For long essays, the title is to be typed in capital letters on the first page. Below this comes the student's name, their student number, the course for which the essay is submitted, the name of the course coordinator, and the date of submission. There should be no page number on the title page. An example of a proper title page is given in Appendix A.

For shorter essays (below 2500 words), students may forgo the title page and simply write the title above the text of their essay, along with their name, student number, and date of submission. However, it is up to the course coordinator to designate whether or not a proper title page is required.

2.2 Font, Spacing, Margins, and Page Numbers

The essay text should be double spaced, and the font ought to be in Times New Roman, size 12. A larger size and different font style may be used for headings or section titles at the student's discretion.

The margins of the essay should be 2.5 cm all around and all pages in the essay must have page numbers, except for the title page. Page numbers must be written at the bottom of each page and should be centred. The text of the essay should also be 'justified', and the first line of each new paragraph must begin with an indentation. However, the first line at the beginning of a new section and below a section heading should not be indented, see Appendix B.

2.3 Essay Length

The length of the essay assignment is dependent on the amount of coursework in a given course, as well as the year in which the course is taught. The length is also determined by the course coordinator and shall be given in terms of word-count (e.g. 3000 words).

Given that the Essay Standard requires that all papers be double-spaced, with 2.5 cm margins all around, one page should fit approximately 350 words. Bibliographies are not counted in the word/page count.

2.4 Referencing System

Referencing is a standardized way of acknowledging the sources of information and ideas that are used while writing the essay. In that regard, students should do their best to cite all of their sources properly and avoid plagiarism. Proper referencing also helps readers to verify quotations, allows readers to follow up on what the authors have written, and lets them locate the cited works easily.

There are many different citation styles, such as the American Psychological Association (APA) style, or the Chicago Manual of Style. For essays written at Lazarski University however, the preferred referencing system is the 'Harvard Style'. Harvard style is often referred to as an "author-date", or "parenthetical" system. It is widely accepted in academic publications, although there are several variations in the way that it is used.

The Harvard style uses parentheses instead of footnotes as a way to cite sources. In their essays, students may also use footnotes but only as a way to clarify or expand on a given point and **NOT** as a way to reference. For good examples of how to use and apply the Harvard style, check the following links:

<http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/tutorials/citing/harvard.html>

<http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>

http://www.library.uq.edu.au/training/citation/harvard_6.pdf

Students may also refer to the *BA Thesis Manual*, as well as the *MA/MSc Dissertation Manual*, for more details. Moreover, they may refer to the Coventry University Harvard Reference Style Quick Guide. The Quick Guide and the Manuals are available on the student resource page (*zasoby*) under the codes "course1" and "course2".

3: ESSAY SUBMISSION AND GRADING

3.1 Submission

All essays are to be submitted before or on the day specified by the course coordinator. Late submissions may result in penalties and lower grades. Each student **MUST** submit a paper copy of their essay **AND** an electronic copy either on disc or via email. The electronic copy will be used by the course coordinator to verify that the work has not been plagiarized by using the anti-plagiarism programs Turn-it-in-UK, as well as www.plagiat.pl.

3.2 Grading

Essay grades will be given in percents ranging from 0 to 100, although students should not expect to be given perfect scores because, after all, it is impossible to define what exactly constitutes a “perfect” essay. To receive an “A” on their essays, students should aim to achieve 65 percent or above. Scores below 40 percent constitute a failing grade.

The table below details the different grade scales in terms of percents, British-letter grades, and Polish grades.

Percent	British letter scale	Polish scale
71-100%*	A+	5,5*
65-70%	A	5,0
59-64%	B	4,5
53-58%	C	4,0
47-52%	D	3,5
40-46%	E	3,0
0-39%	F	2

* a grade of A+ or in Polish “celujący”, is to be given only for truly exceptional work

The following table specifies the characteristics of excellent, mediocre, and poor essays.

Undergraduate level:

Class	Mark range	Guidelines
Class I	90 – 100%	In addition to that for 70 – 79% below, an outstanding answer that could hardly be bettered. High degree of understanding, critical/analytic skills and original research, where specified. Outstanding in all respects.
	80 – 89%	In addition to that for 70 – 79% below, the answer will demonstrate an excellent level of understanding, presence of clear description, critical/analytical skills or research, as appropriate.

Class	Mark range	Guidelines
	70 – 79%	Answer entirely relevant to the assignment set. Answer will demonstrate clear understanding of theories, concepts, issues and methodology, as appropriate. There will be evidence of wide-ranging reading and/or research, as appropriate, beyond the minimum recommended. Answers will be written/presented in a clear, well-structured way with clarity of expression. At level 3, evidence of independent, critical thought would normally be expected.
Class II : I	65 – 69%	Answer demonstrating a very good understanding of the requirements of the assignment. Answer will demonstrate very good understanding of theories, concepts, issues and methodology, as appropriate. Answer will be mostly accurate/appropriate, with few errors. Little, if any, irrelevant material may be present. Reading beyond the recommended minimum will be present where appropriate. Well organised and clearly written/presented.
	60 – 64%	A good understanding, with few errors. Some irrelevant material may be present. Well organised and clearly written/presented. Some reading/research beyond recommended in evidence.
Class II : II	55 – 59%	Answer demonstrating a good understanding of relevant theories, concepts, issues and methodology. Some reading/research beyond that recommended may be present. Some errors may be present and inclusion of irrelevant material. May not be particularly well-structured, and/or clearly presented.
	50 – 54%	Answer demonstrating a reasonable understanding of theories, concepts, issues and methodology. Answer likely to show some errors of understanding. May be significant amount of irrelevant material. May not be well-structured and expression/presentation may be unclear at times.
Class III	45 - 49%	An understanding demonstrated, but may be incomplete and with some errors. Limited use of material with limited reading/research on the topic. Likely to be poorly structured and not well-expressed/presented. Irrelevant material likely to be present.
	40 – 44%	Basic understanding demonstrated, with some correct description. Answer likely to be incomplete with substantial errors or misunderstandings. Little use of material and limited reading/research on the topic in evidence. May be poorly

Class	Mark range	Guidelines
		structured and poorly expressed/presented. Some material may be irrelevant to the assignment requirements.
Marginal fail	35 – 39%	Some relevant material will be present. Understanding will be poor with little evidence of reading/research on the topic. Fundamental errors and misunderstanding likely to be present. Poor structure and poor expression/presentation. Much material may not be relevant to the assignment.
Fail	30 – 34%	Inadequate answer with little relevant material and poor understanding of theories, concepts, issues and methodology, as appropriate. Fundamental errors and misunderstandings will be present. Material may be largely irrelevant. Poorly structured and poorly expressed/presented.
	20 – 29%	Clear failure to provide answer to the assignment. Little understanding and only a vague knowledge of the area. Serious and fundamental errors and lack of understanding. Virtually no evidence of relevant reading/research. Poorly structured and inadequately expressed/presented.
	0 – 19%	Complete failure, virtually no understanding of requirements of the assignment. Material may be entirely irrelevant. Answer may be extremely short, and in note form only. Answer may be fundamentally wrong, or trivial. Not a serious attempt.

Postgraduate level:

Indicative mark	Percentage % marks	Characteristics
A	70% and above	Very high standard of critical analysis using appropriate conceptual frameworks. Excellent understanding and exposition of relevant issues. Clearly structured and logically developed arguments. Good awareness of nuances and complexities. Substantial evidence of well-executed independent research. Excellent evaluation and synthesis of source material. Relevant data and examples, all properly referenced.
	Distinction 70% and above	
B	69-60%	High standard of critical analysis using appropriate conceptual frameworks. Clear awareness and exposition of relevant issues. Clearly structured and logically developed arguments.

		<p>Awareness of nuances and complexities. Evidence of independent research. Good evaluation and synthesis of source material. Relevant data and examples, all properly referenced.</p>
	Merit 60-69%	
C	59-50%	<p>Uses appropriate conceptual frameworks. Attempts analysis but includes some errors and/or omissions. Shows awareness of issues but no more than to be expected from attendance at classes. Arguments reasonably clear but underdeveloped. Insufficient evidence of independent research. Insufficient evaluation of source material. Some good use of relevant data and examples, but incompletely referenced.</p>
D	49-40%	<p>Adequate understanding of appropriate conceptual frameworks. Answer too descriptive and/or any attempt at analysis is superficial, containing errors and/or omissions. Shows limited awareness of issues but also some confusion. Arguments not particularly clear. Limited evidence of independent research and reliance on a superficial repeat of class notes. Relatively superficial use of relevant data, sources and examples and poorly referenced.</p>
	Pass Mark = 40%	
E	39-30%	<p>Weak understanding of appropriate conceptual frameworks. Weak analysis and several errors and omissions. Establishes a few relevant points but superficial and confused exposition of issues. No evidence of independent research and reliance on a superficial repeat of class notes. Relatively superficial use of relevant data, sources and examples and poorly referenced.</p>
F	29% and below	<p>Very weak or no understanding of appropriate conceptual frameworks. Very weak or no grasp of analysis and may errors and omissions. Very little or no understanding of the issues raised by the question. No appropriate references to data, sources, examples or even class notes.</p>

APPENDIX A – SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

The Role of Intellectuals in Contemporary Politics

By: John F. Awesome

Student Number: 100 500

Course:

Advanced Political Theory

Module Leader:

Prof. Knows-A-Lot

Date of Submission:

February 31, 2052

APPENDIX B – PAGE FORMAT

2,5 cm
margins
all
around

To all appearances higher education in both the EU and the US has turned into a more fashionable topic for politicians and journalists than it was ten years ago. Since rumour has it that in the 'age of globalisation' we are living in a 'knowledge society' and that our economies are basically 'knowledge economies,' higher education has attracted more public attention than it did before. These new buzzwords have been spreading within and beyond academia with some success and have been at the very heart of European higher education policy discourse for a decade¹.

Seen from a historical perspective this sudden public preoccupation with the idea of the 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge economy' is surprising, because European thinkers from the Enlightenment onwards—from Voltaire to Comte and Heidegger to Foucault and Habermas—have been emphasising that the systematic production and application of knowledge is the specific characteristic of 'modern'—European-style—societies. So given the fact that the 'knowledge economy' and 'knowledge society' have been known to 'civilised' Europeans for more than some 250 years, this idea could hardly be presented as a new message. Therefore one can expect that the new meaning of 'knowledge society' will differ from the traditional one rooted in Enlightenment thought (Habermas 1989).

This expectation is confirmed when one discovers that its new proponents represent universities as enterprises and academics as entrepreneurs. Simultaneously, real entrepreneurs are now represented as the 'stakeholders' of the 'McUniversities,' who are entitled to populate their 'boards of trustees.' The ideology of the 'knowledge economy' thus simply means that the domain of knowledge production is economised: *homo academicus* is modelled after *homo economicus*. Capitalist economy no longer finds its ideological legitimization in scientific terms, as was the case in 'late capitalism' according to the

¹ For a more detailed account of this debate, see the writings of Gower Colclough and Peter Bock.

2

text must be double-spaced and justified, in Times New Roman font, size 12

Harvard referencing style

footnotes used only as a way to expand or clarify a point, not as a way to reference or cite facts

page numbers at the bottom and center of page