

ESSAY WRITING

BUSM 3115 ETHICS and GOVERNANCE

Choose your topic at least three weeks before the paper is due, do some reading in the area, and then decide on a proposition you wish to argue. Always remember that an essay is an extended argument, not a broad, descriptive discussion of a topic.

Try to have a formal structure for your argument in mind before you start writing. Prepare a rough outline beforehand if you are not used to writing essays. Make sure you have a proposition for the introduction and a conclusion for the end of the essay. The conclusion (and often the last point you discuss too) usually lingers longest in the mind of an assessor, so save your best for last. Make sure your essay does not wander, but sticks to the topic. Avoid unnecessary storytelling – too much background information is padding and doesn't get you marks. Ensure every paragraph contributes to your argument, but don't be so brief when you are making your points that the reader is not sure that you understand the topic.

All essays should be formatted in a 12 point font with serifs, like Palatino or Times (New) Roman. Arial and Helvetica are heading fonts, and are not suitable for essays. Leave at least 2 cm margins and 1½ line-spacing so the assessor has room to leave comments on your essay. Always page-number your essay as pages often fall off. Also always have an essay cover sheet stapled to the front or your essay may get lost.

Use the in-text/author-date Harvard system for references and conclude the essay with a reference list in alphabetical order by family name. Avoid citations of "junk" internet sites or textbooks from other subjects. The best essays will refer to primary sources (e.g. the works of theorists, annual reports, government policies and codes etc.). They will supplement them with several journal articles and research-based books – i.e. those which academics write for each other (not for students). Using the reference system properly will mean avoiding throwing away easy marks. An essay should have at least four in-text references per page, and normally more. And an essay that is 10% under the word-limit automatically loses 10% of its potential mark.

Do not rely on long lists of information or long quotations from other sources. Do make sure everything that is not your own idea or words is referenced properly. If your written English is not 100%, you can always go to the Student Learning Centre for help. Always ask your tutor or lecturer if you are unsure about anything. And if you are ill, don't forget to apply for special consideration.

Be persuasive, not complete. Use key terms important to your argument, as they show you know your topic well. Use the bibliographies found in other sources to chase up additional references. Get a librarian to help you if you are not sure how to find appropriate material. Avoid slang, and always be specific ("the inflation rate was 18%"), rather than general ("the inflation rate was high") whenever you can.