Welcome.
Tonight’s Collaborate Session will begin at 7pm AEDST.
Overview of tonight’s session

• Why essays and reports?
• Essays vs reports: what’s the difference?
• Answering the question, getting the marks
• Essay structure
• Report structure
• Critical, formal and objective writing
• Referencing
• Questions
Why essays and reports?
Why focus on essays and reports?

- The genre of your assessment items will vary
- For example, you might write wikis, blogs, journal entries, or presentations
- BUT these are all variations of the basic skills of writing essays and reports
- If you can write an essay and a report, you can tackle any other genre
Essay vs report: What’s the difference?
Features of essays, reports, or both?

Correct punctuation
Objective voice
Table of contents
Formal language
Might involve analysis of primary material (e.g., interviews, surveys)
Correct grammar
Reference list
Structured paragraphs using topic sentences
Recommendations
Formal presentation
Adheres to word count
Discusses a topic, often presenting an argument
Academia focus
Directly addresses question
Uses reputable sources
No bullet points

Numbered headings
Tables
Ideas supported with evidence
Work-place focus
Investigates a situation and suggests solutions/improvements/innovations
In-text referencing
Graphics
Executive summary
Based on wide reading of relevant sources (e.g., journal articles, books)
No personal pronouns (e.g., I, we)
Formal structure
Can use colour
Title page
Concise language
No graphics
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay only</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Report only</th>
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<td>Essay only</td>
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<td>Correct punctuation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academia focus</td>
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<td>Table of contents</td>
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<tr>
<td>No graphics</td>
<td>Formal language</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td>No bullet points</td>
<td>Correct grammar</td>
<td>Numbered headings</td>
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<td>No personal pronouns (eg I, we)</td>
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<td>Formal structure</td>
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<tr>
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Answering the question
Before you begin...

• Spend a lot of quality time with the question. What **exactly** is it asking you to do?

• Your report or essay may be well-researched, beautifully written, elegantly structured and perfectly referenced, but if it doesn’t answer the question your marks will suffer.
Three crucial elements

An assignment question generally consists of three elements:

• the **subject**: indicates the general area

• the **focus words**: indicate the part of the subject you must focus on, and limit yourself to

• the **task words**: tell you what you must do with the information.
Find the subject, focus and task words below

• Compare and contrast the principles underpinning ontological and deontological ethics. Which approach is more appropriate in the workplace? Use examples from your own experience to support your opinion.

• Discuss the cycle of failure, mediocrity and success in managing employee relationships, and the role of staff empowerment in breaking the cycle.

• There is disagreement among online educators about whether discussion board participation should count toward students’ grades. You are a researcher employed by an online university to write the following report: Does compulsory participation improve educational outcomes for online students?
Pay attention to the criteria!

• Always carefully read the marking criteria
• You’re told where the marks are – your grade should not come as a shock!
• Assess your drafts against the criteria. Have you:
  – included all of the required information?
  – done the right thing with the information (according to the task words?)
  – excluded irrelevant information?
  – paid enough attention to referencing and other aspects that might be worth a lot of marks?
### An example: Where are the marks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theoretical</strong></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argument developed from theory and research using multiple sources such as journal articles.</strong></td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application of Theory</strong></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The theory is applied to the product, evaluations and implications are drawn and recommendations are made.</strong></td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>References</strong></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate APA referencing style used.</strong></td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format and presentation</strong></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional and appropriate format used.</strong></td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Essays
Sample

• Find a sample essay in the Student Toolbox on our website

• www.swinburneonline.edu.au > Current students > Student Toolbox > Write a winning assessment > Sample essay
Essay structure

Introduction
- Background
- Thesis statement

Body
A: Topic sentence
1. Support
2. Support
3. Support
Concluding sentence

B: Topic sentence
1. Support
2. Support
3. Support
Concluding sentence

C: Topic sentence
1. Support
2. Support
3. Support
Concluding sentence

Conclusion
- Restatement or summary of main points
- Final comment

Note:
The body is the longest part of your essay. It can have as many paragraphs as necessary to support your answer (within the word limit).
Introduction

• Gives brief, relevant background information about the topic

• Provides a brief outline of the main points of the essay, in order

• In argumentative essays, also includes your contention (argument or point of view)
Body

• Each paragraph discusses ONE idea in detail.

• Paragraphs are like mini essays:
  – Topic sentence (intro – 10%)
  – Evidence, explanation & examples (body – 80%)
  – Concluding sentence (conclusion – 10%)
Conclusion

• A final paragraph that reiterates the main point/argument of your essay

• Reminds the reader of the most important ideas discussed

• Must not contain any new information.
Reference list

• The full bibliographic details of each of your sources

• Can only include sources for which you have in-text citations

• Either in APA style (Education and Psychology students) or Harvard style (all other students)
Reports
Main sections of a report

1. Title page
2. Executive summary/abstract
3. Table of contents
4. Introduction
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Recommendations
8. Reference list
9. Appendices

(This is a business report format. Depending on the type and purpose of your report, you may not require all of these sections. Read your assignment question carefully.)
Executive summary

• Gives the reader a brief overview of the entire report.

• Language must be concise; this should be less than a page in length.

• Allows the reader to preview the report and decide if it provides them with information that will be useful to them.
Table of contents

• Never do this manually! Total waste of time.

• Learn to make Microsoft Word do it for you:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcadhM6ZjGQ
Introduction

• Similar to an introduction in an essay, but arranged into numbered headings and sub-headings

1.0 Introduction
    1.1 Background
    1.2 Aims
Discussion

• A series of well-organised sections, with numbered headings and sub-headings, specifically related to the assignment question.

• Show how the theory/literature relates to the problem being addressed.

2.0 Main heading
   2.1 Sub heading
      2.1.1 Sub sub heading
3.0 Next main heading etc.
Conclusion

• A summary of the main findings with a statement about how they can be used to resolve the main problem or issue addressed.

• NO NEW INFORMATION/IDEAS
Recommendations

• A list of actions to be taken as a result of the findings

• Must be drawn from your conclusions

• Outline the specific actions that are required and include WHAT, WHO, HOW, WHEN
Reference list

• The full bibliographic details of each of your sources

• Can only include sources for which you have in-text citations

• Either in APA style (Education and Psychology students) or Harvard style (all other students)
Appendices

• Any detailed information (such as a sample questionnaire) which is not essential for the reader to understand the outcomes or conclusions of a report, but which can provide them with a more complete understanding.

• Readers can choose to look at this section if they wish to.
Critical, formal and objective writing
## Critical writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive writing . . .</th>
<th>Critical analytical writing . . .</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>states what happened</td>
<td>identifies the significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>states what something is like</td>
<td>evaluates strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gives the story so far</td>
<td>weighs one piece of information against another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>states the order in which things happened</td>
<td>makes reasoned judgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>says how to do something</td>
<td>argues a case according to the evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>explains what a theory says</td>
<td>shows why something is relevant or suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explains how something works</td>
<td>indicates why something will work (best)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notes the method used</td>
<td>identifies whether something is appropriate or suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>says when something occurred</td>
<td>identifies why the timing is of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>states the different components</td>
<td>weight up the importance of component parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>states options</td>
<td>gives reasons for selecting each option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lists details</td>
<td>evaluates the relative significance of details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lists in any order</td>
<td>structures information in order of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>states links between items</td>
<td>shows the relevance of links between pieces of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gives information</td>
<td>draws conclusions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Formal language

• In academic writing, your expression must be as formal as possible.

• AVOID:
  – Contractions (can’t, doesn’t, hadn’t)
  – SMS language (gr8, lol, whatever other abbreviations the kids are using these days :-/
  – Slang (kids, Aussies, chooks, guys, wanna, gonna)
  – Idioms (jump on the bandwagon, throw in the towel)
  – Exclamation marks!
  – Rhetorical questions (Is this the kind of person who should be running a country in this century?)
  – Overly-complex phrasing and wasted words (see next slide)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO!</th>
<th>YES!</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owing to the fact that</td>
<td>Because</td>
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<tr>
<td>A medium-sized group of 25 people</td>
<td>25 people</td>
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<tr>
<td>The CEO has appointed a change agent to move</td>
<td>The CEO has appointed someone to lead the restructure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>structural transformation off the backburner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Each and every</td>
<td>Each (OR every, but never both!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There have been more and more complaints being</td>
<td>Complaints have increased</td>
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<tr>
<td>made by people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gave a definition of</td>
<td>Defined</td>
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<tr>
<td>In short supply</td>
<td>Scarce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Each and every day there are more and more people</td>
<td>Morality is constantly redefined</td>
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<tr>
<td>giving different definitions of various ideas about</td>
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<tr>
<td>what is the right way to act and what is the wrong</td>
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<tr>
<td>way to act in a given situation</td>
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Objective writing – no “I”s

Avoid personal pronouns and present a balanced view.

a) In my opinion, this company is totally old-fashioned – it’s got no idea how to use social media to get loyal customers.

b) This company appears to rely on out-dated modes of communication, rather than harnessing the possibilities of social media to develop customer loyalty.
Objective writing – no emotion!

Even when ‘I’ is permitted, you must maintain emotional distance from the subject.

a. Looking back, I think I was a total idiot... I gave in to one stupid whinger and made everyone else think I couldn’t care less about them.

b. My actions in this instance did not adhere to the utilitarian principle of serving the greater good, as I prioritised an individual’s demands over the needs of the team.
Referencing
Referencing

• You must reference ANY words/ideas/images from ANYWHERE other than your own head!

• Who attended the ‘Referencing and Research’ collaborate on Tuesday?

• If you missed it, make sure you attend the next one:
  – Thursday, 3rd April, 7pm Melbourne time
Referencing styles

• Psychology or Education students must use APA style

• All other students must use Harvard style

This site helps with both:  
http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/recite/
Advice and support
eLAs: For advice relating to unit content

• Post it on the discussion board
  Eg. “I’m a bit confused about the theory of _____. I think it means _______________ , is this correct?”

• If it’s about an assessment item, post it under the appropriate ‘Assessment’ forum
  eg. “In assessment 2, the rubric says we need to provide examples from our own experience. Can we use personal pronouns in this section?”
For everything else

Contact the Student Liaison Team
Your one-stop-shop for student support

Help Web Form http://www.swinburneonline.edu.au/help

Phone: 1300 937 765
9am-9pm  Monday- Friday
10am-6pm  Saturday-Sunday / Public Holidays

Email: help@swinburneonline.com
Recap
Main points to remember

• Most assessment items are based on the skills of essay and/or report-writing
• Essays and reports share many similarities but have important differences
• Structure is crucial
• Referencing is essential
• Writing must be critical, formal and objective
• Help is available
Social people – get involved

Use Discussion Board

- Post
- Follow threads
- Ask questions
- Find your eLA

Facebook

- Source of support
- Source of information

Business
https://www.facebook.com/groups/235773153180312/

Social Science
https://www.facebook.com/groups/250408678375891/

Education
https://www.facebook.com/groups/351898221564644/

Communication
https://www.facebook.com/groups/109076315883502/

Question time