Department of History Guide To Essay Writing

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What is an Essay?

The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines an essay as 'a literary composition (usually prose, and short) on any subject'. The word comes from the French verb *essayer*: to try, or attempt something. In its general non-academic sense, an essay is a short piece of prose which attempts to persuade the reader to agree with a particular viewpoint or proposition. A newspaper editorial, or a TIME magazine 'Essay', or a political party's manifesto, are examples of the non-academic essay.

Note that the primary aim is not to convey a lot of information but to persuade the reader.

At university, the academic essay is a much more complex beast, requiring the scholarly apparatus of footnotes and a bibliography. It is a *formal academic communication*, rather like an article in a scholarly journal. This means that it must conform to various academic conventions, and satisfy standards of accuracy, analysis and presentation.

A university-level History essay may be defined as *an extended argument supported by evidence in answer to a specific problem or question about the past.* This makes it rather different from an essay in English literature, or one of the social sciences, where theoretical issues are often paramount. Historians are usually more concerned to explain *change across time*, and therefore focus on issues of causation, the interpretation of evidence, and the patterns of explanation developed by other historians. (The latter comprises the branch of History known as Historiography.)

An academic essay is an extended reasoned argument, with properly acknowledged supporting evidence, which attempts to answer a particular question or problem.

Another definition of a university essay is *a reasoned statement supported by evidence and/or authorities in the field of study*. This is the sort of essay designed to test a student's mastery of a topic or problem. Historiographical essays often take this form, in which the principal aim is the accurate summary of differing viewpoints and/or research results.

We all enjoy a good story, and most history books aimed at the general reader try to construct an interesting *narrative* of past events. However, a university-level essay must go much further than merely 'telling the story' of what happened in the past. Its main task is *analysis*; to explain *why* things happened the way they did. This is an intellectual exercise which focuses on *ideas* as much as evidence or facts, comparing rival interpretations and assessing the strength of their supporting arguments.

A good history essay is not primarily concerned to tell the story of what happened, but rather to analyse the *reasons why* events happened as they did.

The Basics

There are many different ways of writing effective and successful essays. The following represents one that works well and covers all of the essential steps.

Note especially the equal time devoted to planning and research; it is easy enough to gather relevant information, but a good essay requires *selection* of evidence, clear thinking, and careful planning to answer the specific question asked.

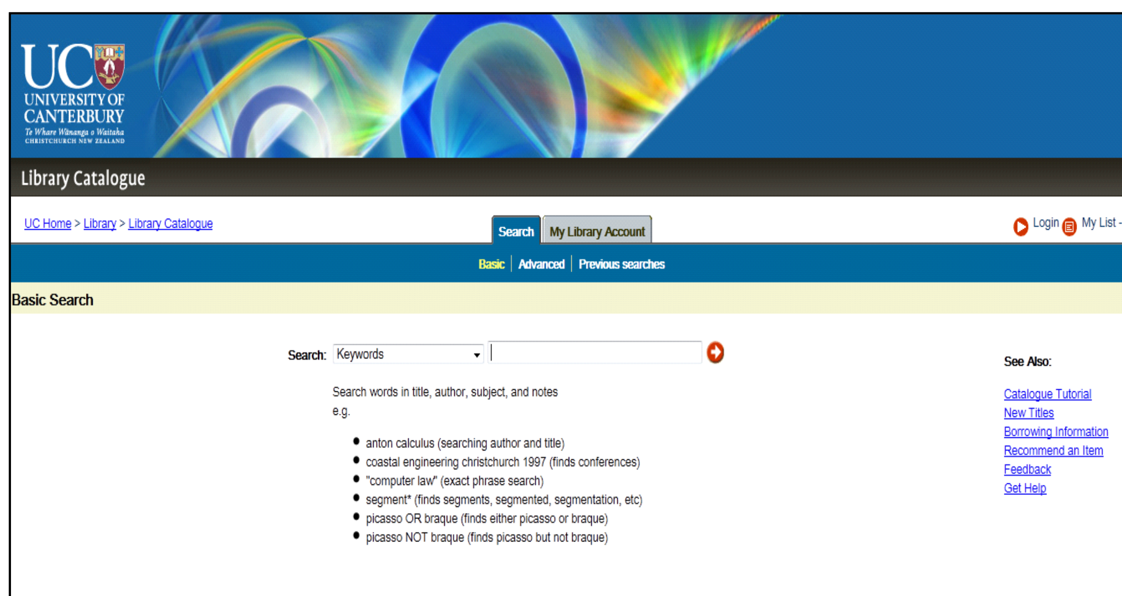
PHASE 1:	PLANNING	1.	Check the formal requirements
		2.	Draft a timetable for research and writing
		3.	Analyse the question: what does it *mean*?
		4.	Preliminary skim-reading
		5.	Plan the broad structure
PHASE 2:	RESEARCH	1.	Read the relevant sources
		2.	Keep essay question and plan in mind
		3.	Make notes of directly useful material
		4.	Reconsider your preliminary plan
		5.	Edit your material accordingly
PHASE 3:	WRITING	1.	Assemble material in logical sequence
		2.	Write a first rough draft
		3.	Link paragraphs into a coherent argument
		4.	Revise the draft: read it aloud
		5.	Check length: ‘boil down, don’t amputate’
		6.	Add footnotes and bibliography
		7.	Type the final version
		8.	Carefully proof-read it
		9.	Hand it in!

Reading

Your course guide will offer some starting points for essay research. If the lecturer has recommended some titles as ESSENTIAL READING for an essay question, you should read them *before* you start drafting your essay!

Use the Library's IPAC database to find the books most relevant to your essay question. Make a list of titles and call numbers to locate the resources you need. Often the recommended readings in your course guide will contain extensive bibliographies; use these to determine which are the other 'landmark' works of your topic, and get these from the library.

The library catalogue search page



A search of article database such as JSTOR, Proquest and Google Scholar will usually return a range of useful results. Be sure to use specific search terms (such as 'Thomas Jefferson' rather than 'American President'). Many of the articles most relevant to your essay will likely appear on the first few pages of results.

If you require assistance with your research, there are a variety of people who can help. Your lecturer and tutor can guide you towards the most important sources; and they may even let you borrow books they own. The library also runs regular sessions on getting the most out of its databases. Lastly, the library employs a Humanities liaison who can provide information on accessing resources.

> Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to
> Be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in
> parts; others to be read but not curiously; and some few to be
> read wholly, and with diligence and attention.
>
> Francis BACON (156 1-1626)

Most of your reading will comprise academic books and articles. You need to grasp the difference between PRIMARY and SECONDARY sources and be aware of the variety of secondary sources in order to select those most likely to be useful for your particular essay.

As a general rule, proceed from the broad to the particular in your preliminary reading. Begin with general surveys and locate passages relevant to your essay question; but remember that older surveys may contain out-of-date opinions or conclusions. As your knowledge of the subject grows, you will become more confident in your assessment of secondary sources, their usefulness for your current essay, and differences of interpretation between historians. Avoid ‘literary’ histories and popular encyclopaedias, as these are usually over-simplified and redundant. Likewise, be wary of what you may find on the Internet, especially items which give no source or author’s name.

As your reading deepens, you will encounter more detailed academic monographs and articles, usually thick with footnotes. Here you must be careful not to get lost, or to lose sight of your essay question. Academic articles are usually written for other scholars who are at the ‘cutting-edge’ of new research, and often assume a great deal of prior knowledge. Though their conclusions may be relevant for your essay, their discussion of primary evidence is likely to be at a level that is too detailed for a first-year essay. On the other hand, the closer one gets to the primary evidence, the more likely one is to get bright new ideas or to think of new questions to ask. But it is always advisable to master the secondary literature first, in case your bright new idea is the one discarded by everyone else in 1980!

Always read with a purpose. Write your essay question out on paper and keep it in view alongside the book you are reading. List subsidiary questions as they occur to you. Keep asking yourself, ‘is this *relevant*?’ and ‘how will this help me to answer *this* question’.

Making Notes

Why make notes? For those of us who lack a photographic memory or exceptional powers of recall, written notes are our best means of storing the information which will form the basis of our essay. Notes need to be accurate and well-organised if they are to be usable. There are many different systems for keeping notes, and the touchstone for choosing one system above another is whether or not it works for you. You need to be comfortable with it, and it needs to be efficient for your purposes. Making notes is an active intellectual process. You need to concentrate hard and *think* as you read.

Note taking

Before you start, write down the full bibliographical details of the source you want to read. (See section on citation style below for correct format.)

As you make your notes, get into the habit of writing the page-number of the source. This will save time and re-checking when you construct your footnotes.

Photocopying is no substitute for reading and note-making; it merely gives you a personal copy of the relevant article or chapter to study outside of the library.

Underlining and highlighting are poor substitutes for note-making; they merely *identify* sentences which you think may be relevant or important. You still need to digest their ideas and record them in your own words.

NEVER underline or highlight in a library book or journal; that is vandalism. You may make annotations in your own books as you please, but remember that underlining sharply reduces their resale value.

Underlining and highlighting are poor substitutes for thinking, digesting and making notes in your own words.

Resist the beginner's temptation to copy everything that seems new or amazing to you. It is far better to *read* the whole chapter or article first, and then go over it again more slowly, deciding what needs to be recorded for your current essay. Remember the word-limit: the more notes you write, the more you will have to discard when composing your final draft.

Read critically: keep asking yourself, 'what is the main point of this paragraph?' (Look for a topic-sentence at the start, or a conclusion or summary at the end.) Keep asking: 'What is this historian trying to prove?' 'What is the line of argument here?' 'Does the evidence presented support these conclusions?' As you read more widely, you will gain confidence in assessing the value of your sources. Get into the habit of asking questions as you read, and use them to compare and contrast what different sources have to say about a particular problem.

Always distinguish between *factual information* (evidence) and *interpretative material* (argument). A good general history will give you enough basic factual information to get started, and as your reading proceeds you will not need to duplicate such items in your notes. Instead, concentrate on each historian's *interpretation*, adding factual details only when they form significant supporting evidence for his or her argument. Also be alert for gaps or silences in your sources.

Keep asking: how does this help to answer the question?

Be careful to keep your own ideas or comments in the margin of your notes, or between square brackets, so they do not get muddled with your sources when you construct footnotes.

Keep in mind the difference between *narrative* and *analysis*, and make sure that your essay is mostly analysis. As historians are concerned to explain change across time in the past, they often cannot avoid narrating events or describing changes as they unfold. Most general readers who enjoy history books want to follow a story-line. But academic history essays are *not* primarily descriptive, nor should they merely 'tell the story' of past events. They should stretch the reader's mind much further, and seek to explain causes or outcomes, and find 'the reasons why' things in the past happened as they did. Narrative should be *avoided* in academic essays, because it tends to impose its own agenda, of 'what happened next?' Analysis by contrast tries to explain how the sequence works as a whole, isolating causes, linkages and 'reasons why'.

Aim at analysis rather than narrative

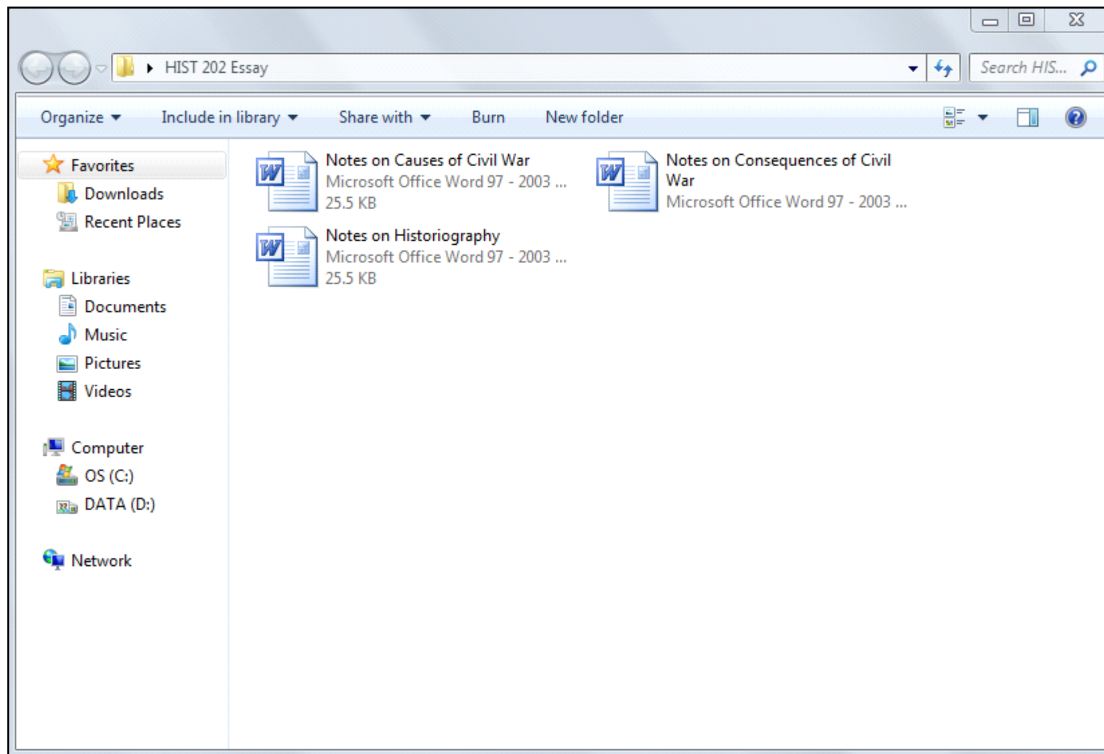
Organising your notes

Most students compile notes for their essays on laptops or PCs. One of the more effective methods when writing notes electronically is to divide your notes between three or four Word documents. Each document represents a key theme of your essay. Within each document, arrange the evidence from your sources in the order you plan to cite and use it.

Each source requires a bibliographical reference (including page numbers). Devise a short-title for each book or article you consult (author's surname plus key word or phrase from source title).

Be sure when splitting your notes into thematic documents that you do not lose the original context in which your information appeared. It often helps to preface your notes with bracketed comments of your own, summarising where the information came from and its' importance. This will ensure you can still identify why you wrote the note when you return to use it two or three weeks later.

Example of Note Organisation



Starting a Bibliography

Always begin with the author's surname, because bibliographies are arranged alphabetically by authors' surnames. Then add the author's first name(s) in full, the exact title of the book or article, and the city, publisher and year of publication. (See below for correct format of books, articles and chapters in books).

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's ideas, sentences or research results. It is a cardinal academic sin because it involves intellectual dishonesty, and thus ranks alongside cheating in exams. In a word, it is *theft*. The penalties can be severe. Gross plagiarism in an essay usually brings automatic failure, and a repeat offence can result in expulsion from the course, just as cheating in exams can result in expulsion from the university.

Your essay marker will scan the electronic copy of your essay using Turnitin, the anti-plagiarism software to which the university subscribes. This software compares sentences and references in your essay with data from all other relevant history papers produced in New Zealand and internationally.

How to avoid plagiarism? Good note-making habits will largely obviate the dangers, and good footnoting will acknowledge your debts. The first rule is DON'T copy a whole sentence UNLESS you are fairly sure you want to use it as a quotation. Quotations should be used very sparingly in an essay. Quotations must be exact and accurate, down to the last comma and full-stop, they must be enclosed in quotation-

marks, and they must have a numbered footnote which gives the exact page-reference for the sentence quoted.

Avoid paraphrasing: altering a few words here and there does not make the passage any less a direct quotation; merely an inaccurate one. Your notes need to be written in your own words, as far as possible, especially summaries of a source's ideas and arguments. Commonplace facts or well-known events do not need to be footnoted, but other people's ideas or interpretations do.

Planning

Collecting information is relatively easy and enjoyable, but there is greater intellectual challenge and satisfaction to be found in analysing and interpreting the information in terms of the problem or question you are trying to answer: your aim is to construct a concise and coherent argument which answers the question convincingly.

If you have followed the note-taking method outlined above and asked subsidiary questions as you read, you will have begun the process of interpretation already and should by now have some ideas about the main points needed to answer the essay-question. You should also have sorted your material into a *hierarchy of relevance* and importance in relation to the question, and be able to see which are your main points and which are your subsidiary or supporting points. You should now *select* from your material the evidence which best supports your main points. You will need to make judgements about the weight you will place on each key point: not all will have equal bearing on your essay's explanation of historical causation or change over time.

Your preliminary skim-reading should suggest a few broad 'reasons why' as answers to your question. Use these as the basis of your essay-plan. As your reading proceeds, you may add further main points, or realise that what looked like one idea is actually more complex and may need two or three main points to substantiate it. Be flexible: keep modifying your plan as your grasp of the subject improves. Try rearranging the sequence of main points to find the most coherent and convincing flow of argument.

When you have exhausted your relevant sources, stop to take stock. Examine your plan again, and try to reduce your main ideas to short single statements. In a 1500-word essay, allowing for an introduction and conclusion, you may only have room for 8 to 12 paragraphs, so you should aim at no more than four main points, to allow room to substantiate, develop and link them.

Your four short statements now form the *skeleton* of your argument. Each one should appear as the topic-sentence or conclusion to a paragraph. These are the statements which you believe to be 'true' and most important to answer the question. Your task now is to convince the reader of their importance!

Always let the bones show! Don't let your main points get lost in a mass of details.

Writing

Effective introductions and conclusions are essential to the success of your essay.

An introduction needs to do three things: draw the reader into the topic, suggest the main ideas to be discussed, and point towards findings. An introduction does NOT simply list the key points of the essay, or merely state the conclusion to come. It should not use phrases like 'this essay will argue/I will argue'. An introduction might begin with a quote by a key figure in the historiography, or from the period under examination. Alternatively, it might start with a succinct statement that hints at the essay's purpose. Look at the introductions in books or articles you enjoyed reading when conducting research: how did they structure their introduction? Why did their introduction make you want to read on?

It is best practice to write the introduction last. Once the body of the essay is complete, the introduction becomes much easier to compose. You as the author now know what comes next, and will understand how to link all of your main themes together in two or three succinct paragraphs.

An introduction should draw the reader into your essay, hint at the key ideas of the essay, and point towards findings.

The conclusion of an essay, meanwhile, has two purposes: to summarise and synthesise. The conclusion needs to reiterate, using different phrasing, the key findings of the essay. It does NOT begin with 'in conclusion/to conclude', but rather with another clear statement which expresses the essence of the essay's argument. The conclusion then needs to assess the broader significance of the findings. Depending on the topic, you might consider one or more of these types of questions: How do your findings contribute to the debate on this issue? Do they reveal something previously overlooked by other scholars? What do they tell us about the attitudes/ideology of the period and its people? Does your interpretation challenge or confirm prevailing views on the topic?

A conclusion should *summarise* the key findings of the essay, and *synthesise* their significance in relation to the overall topic.

Some lecturers recommend that you state your conclusion first, then spend the body of the essay justifying your opinion. A more subtle and tantalising approach is to keep your readers guessing at first: arouse their curiosity, and whet their appetite for more! Your own viewpoint will emerge as the essay develops, from the way you present

your main points, and the essay should reach its climax in a strong and persuasive conclusion.

If the question contains a key word or concept, it is important to define this at the start, because some history essays will turn out to hinge on the meaning of that key word or concept. 'Revolution' is but one example of a key concept which can mean different things to different historians: 'feudalism', 'capitalism' and 'Marxist' are equally problematic. Whole books have been written about these concepts, but you have to pin them down in a sentence or two! You may need to devote your second paragraph to discussing what the question means, defining key concepts and indicating any methodological problems (for example, lack of evidence on some issues). Dictionary definitions are rarely adequate for historians: consult an up-to-date historical dictionary or social science encyclopaedia.

Always define key terms and concepts in the question, for essays and exams.

Construct your essay as a sequence of *paragraphs*. Each paragraph should be a cohesive, integrated unit of 4 to 8 sentences. Avoid extremes of excessive length or shortness, unless for special emphasis. (One sentence does not make a paragraph!) An effective paragraph should contain ONE central idea or statement, usually expressed either as an opening topic-sentence, with supporting evidence and discussion in the middle. (The more specific your evidence and your use of sources, the more footnotes you will need to make.) The last sentence should provide a link or springboard to the next paragraph, perhaps by pointing out that another issue remains unresolved, or that a contrasting viewpoint needs to be considered.

The key to a successful essay is the construction of effective paragraphs

By now you will be well advanced with writing your first *rough draft*. The process of writing is a means of discovering what you really want to say, and how best to say it. Don't be surprised if you change your mind about the importance or relevance of some points as you proceed. Something that seemed terribly obvious early in your reading may now seem less certain or important alongside other points you have discovered. The process of planning may overlap with the process of writing, so don't delay starting your rough draft. Getting your ideas into clear sentences is the only way to make progress.

Aim at clear, concise expression. Avoid ambiguity. Keep asking yourself, 'Am I making this *clear*? Am I *communicating* my meaning to the reader?'

Allow time in your programme to set your rough draft aside for a few days (or at least overnight!) and let it go 'cold' Then read it aloud or, better still, get someone to read it aloud to you! Listen critically for a logical progression of main points and a coherent argument You may see ways to improve it, perhaps by rearranging the sequence of

main points. Then read it again, this time listening critically for clear communication. Be ruthless with any repetitions, irrelevant examples, ambiguities and clumsy or long-winded sentences. '*When in doubt, cut it out*'.

Quotations

These should be used sparingly, and short ones are more effective than long ones. First-year students are often overawed by the brilliance of some historians' prose, and will say 'I had to quote that because I couldn't express it so well myself'. If we all thought like that, nobody would write anything original! The whole point of essay-writing is to get you to grasp the ideas and arguments of other historians, and to express them *in your own words*, even if not quite so concisely or stylishly.

An essay should not consist of a string of quotations.

Quotations should be brief and apt, and must be carefully *integrated* into your argument. Blend them in by identifying their author and context, and *always* comment on their significance or meaning. Quotations are pieces of evidence, and need to be interpreted. If you leave them in isolation to speak for themselves, the reader may simply raise an eyebrow, think 'So what?', and move on!

When to use a quotation? A good rule is that you should never use a quotation merely to convey factual information or commonplace facts. Instead, use a quotation to give an example or illustration from a primary source, or to encapsulate another historian's view-point or research finding. Quotations are best used to convey ideas or opinions rather than facts, or to set up another historian for analysis or criticism.

Some historians use quotations mainly to support their own arguments, but an alternative approach is to use a quotation only when you want to disagree with it.

Quotations are best used sparingly, to convey ideas or opinions rather than facts.

Check the length

Most rough drafts exceed the word limit, so think about how to shorten it. *Don't delete whole paragraphs*. If you have followed the method outlined here, that would wreck the logic of your argument. Cut back on supporting details, or combine paragraphs, but keep those vital main points and 'signpost sentences' which guide the reader through your argument.

Boil down' rather than amputate as you shorten your rough draft.

Now add footnotes and bibliography. Check the whole draft for spelling and grammar lapses, and tidy up the final version.

Carefully *proof-read* the final version three times through.

Save an electronic copy in a different file, and submit it as instructed by the course convener. (Currently through Learn)

Submit the paper-copy of your essay at the Level 4 essay-slot in the School of Humanities *yourself*.

Style and Grammar

As your essay is a formal academic communication, it has to be written in good grammatical English with correct spelling and punctuation.

Since the essay is assumed to be your own work, the opinions are understood to be yours unless they are attributed to a published source in a footnote. It is therefore *unnecessary* to use the first person. AVOID such expressions as ‘I think’ or ‘in my opinion’ or ‘I propose to demonstrate that.’ Do not use ‘we’ or ‘our’, as the reader may not share your opinions. Use neutral phrases such as ‘it is clear from this’ or ‘it follows that’. Also avoid clumsy or pretentious phrases such as ‘the writer considers that.’ Elaborate qualifiers are not needed, and you should try to avoid the passive voice.

Keep your sentences clear and concise. Aim at a direct lucid style, in the active voice, and be careful about number and the relationship of clause to subject.

Abbreviations are fine in footnotes, but must *never* be used in the main text of your essay Write ‘for example,’ NOT e g, and ‘that is’, NOT i.e Use ‘and’, NOT &, and write ‘percent’, NOT % Always write ‘New Zealand’, NOT NZ, and ‘United States’ NOT US or USA. Write centuries in full, for example ‘the eighteenth century’. NOT 18th century.

Dates should be clear and simple, but not abbreviated: write ‘27 August 1946,’ NOT 27 Aug. ‘46, or ‘the 27th of August,’ or 27/8/46.

Rulers’ names should also be kept clear and simple, for example: Henry II, NOT Henry the Second.

Do not translate well-known foreign terms such as *coup d’etat*, *raison d’être* or *Realpolitik*. The French word *parlement*, for example, means something quite different from the English Parliament, and should not be translated. All foreign words and phrases should be underlined, or put into italics.

For historians, as with scientists, accuracy is a duty, not a virtue

Correct spelling is important for accurate written communication. The names of people in the past and of the scholars whose works you use must always be spelt correctly. You need to own a good dictionary and refer to it often in order to improve your vocabulary and to be certain of a word’s meaning and correct spelling. Oxford dictionaries explain many of the terms used by historians.

Avoid jargon, which is defined in some dictionaries as ‘unintelligible gibberish’! Jargon usually means the unfamiliar technical terms used by specialists in a particular activity or branch of knowledge. Historians are most likely to be tempted to use jargon or acronyms from the social sciences (e g IPE: International Political Economy). A good history essay should be capable of being understood by the

average educated person, and if specialised technical terms need to be used they must be defined or explained in plain English.

You should also be careful about using words which have a variety of meanings, especially those which end in - ism. Terms such as feudalism, capitalism and Marxism can mean different things to different scholars. You need to define them carefully and spell out the context in which you use them. Avoid such sweeping (and meaningless) generalisations as ‘Protestantism was a major cause of the rise of capitalism’.

> ‘HISTORIAN: person who reads dead people’s mail.’
>
> anon.

Verbs and the nouns to which they refer must agree in number, despite what you may hear on radio or television. ‘There is more than one way to approach this question’ is correct, ‘There is, after all, three ways to approach this...’ is incorrect. Likewise, pronouns and nouns must agree in number, for example ‘the Government ... it’, NOT ‘the Government ... they’.

There are important differences between a phrase, a clause and a sentence. A sentence requires a verb, not just a participle. For example, in ‘More books were being produced than ever before. On all sorts of topics.’ the phrase ‘On all sorts of topics’ is not a sentence. The writer should have used a comma to make the phrase part of the preceding sentence.

Punctuation: An increasingly common error in essays is what may be called ‘run-on’, where a comma is used instead of a full stop at the end of a sentence. This error can lead to much confusion of meaning. *When in doubt, insert a full-stop*.

Apostrophes are used in English to indicate the possessive case (e.g. ‘Parliament’s prerogative’). Contractions such as can’t or didn’t have no place in formal academic prose. We may say ‘He’d said ...‘ but we MUST write ‘He had said ...’

Possessives: the possessive of ‘it’ is an exception and does not have an apostrophe: e.g. ‘The horse had lost its shoe.’ Many students nervously put apostrophes where they aren’t needed. Avoid confusion with the contraction it’s (= it is).

Plurals: Normally, English nouns simply add an ‘s’, so that ‘ship’ becomes ‘ships’, but there are a few exceptions. For example, the military term ‘corps’ has the same form in both singular and plural. Remember also that the plural of Maori is Maori, and the plural of Pakeha is Pakeha.

Footnotes

When to use footnotes? There are four ‘musts’:

(a) Quotations from someone else’s work. These must be copied exactly, including original punctuation and capital letters, and must always be enclosed in quotation marks. Copying someone else’s sentences or phrases without acknowledgment is PLAGIARISM, a cardinal academic sin.

(b) Key ideas or arguments which you borrow from someone else’s work. In a first-year essay, your bibliography acknowledges your general intellectual debts, but where an idea or research finding is crucial for your argument, footnote it.

(c) Statistics: we need to be able to check their accuracy.

(d) Information which is not commonplace (i.e. not found in most general history surveys), which the marker may wish to verify.

> ‘Damn the ring of truth! Give me the footnotes!’
>
> Bernard Crick

What to put in a footnote? Remember that the primary purpose of a footnote is to tell the reader the source of your information, not to show off how clever you are. (Some academics seem to prefer the latter.) In a first-year essay, simple citation of sources is all that we expect, and perhaps the occasional comparison of sources, to explain why you prefer one historian’s view above another’s. Don‘t use footnotes to pile on additional information to get around the word limit. If the point is important, it should be in the main body of your text. One of the key skills tested by essay-writing is your ability to select evidence and to judge the importance and relevance of information.

Citation Guide: *The Chicago Manual of Style*

The Department of History uses *The Chicago Manual of Style* for footnote and bibliographical entries. Below are examples of how to cite each of the source types you might use when researching an essay. The accurate referencing all the sources you have consulted is an essential part of good scholarship, and contributes to the overall essay grade. It is important not to mix styles, or to employ a style you may be using in another Humanities subject.

In a footnote, the author's surname is preceded by initials or first names. In the bibliography the author's surname comes first and all entries are arranged alphabetically by surname.

The bibliography (and the first footnote citation of a work) must give full details on the source. Older history books tend to give only authors' initials, and to omit the publisher's name. Your bibliography should follow current library practice, which is to give first names in full and to include the publisher's name. (When citing an article in a journal, however, you do *not* give the place or publisher; just the name of the journal.) Always identify a second (or subsequent) edition or a revised edition, but ignore reprints and reimpressions. *Never* name the printer. The publisher's name is the only one required, and just the name: *omit* 'and Company' or 'Publishing Group'.

Citation Style for History Essays

Our thanks to *The Chicago Manual of Style* for their permission to reproduce the following citation guide.
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org

1 = First citation in footnote
2 = Subsequent citations in footnote
3 = Bibliographical format

Book
One author
1. Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 99–100.

2. Pollan, *Omnivore's Dilemma, 3*.

3. Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Two or more authors
1. Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 52.

2. Ward and Burns, *War*, 59–61.

3. Ward, Geoffrey C., and Ken Burns. *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945*. New York: Knopf, 2007.

For four or more authors, list all of the authors in the bibliography; in the note, list only the first author, followed by *et al*. ("and others"):

1. Dana Barnes et al., *Plastics: Essays on American Corporate Ascendance in the 1960s* . . .

2. Barnes et al., *Plastics* . . .

Editor, translator, or compiler instead of author

1. Richmond Lattimore, trans., *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 91–92.

2. Lattimore, *Iliad*, 24.

3. Lattimore, Richmond, trans. *The Iliad of Homer*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Editor, translator, or compiler in addition to author

1. Gabriel García Márquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, trans. Edith Grossman (London: Cape, 1988), 242–55.

2. García Márquez, *Cholera*, 33.

3. García Márquez, Gabriel. *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Translated by Edith Grossman. London: Cape, 1988.

Chapter or other part of a book

1. John D. Kelly, "Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana, and the Moral Economy of War," in *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, ed. John D. Kelly et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 77.

2. Kelly, "Seeing Red," 81–82.

3. Kelly, John D. "Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana, and the Moral Economy of War." In *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, edited by John D. Kelly, Beatrice Jauregui, Sean T. Mitchell, and Jeremy Walton, 67–83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Chapter of an edited volume originally published elsewhere (as in primary sources)

1. Quintus Tullius Cicero. "Handbook on Canvassing for the Consulship," in *Rome: Late Republic and Principate*, ed. Walter Emil Kaegi Jr. and Peter White, vol. 2 of

University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization, ed. John Boyer and Julius Kirshner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 35.

2. Cicero, “Canvassing for the Consulship,” 35.

3. Cicero, Quintus Tullius. “Handbook on Canvassing for the Consulship.” In *Rome: Late Republic and Principate*, edited by Walter Emil Kaegi Jr. and Peter White. Vol. 2 of *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization*, edited by John Boyer and Julius Kirshner, 33–46. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Originally published in Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, trans., *The Letters of Cicero*, vol. 1 (London: George Bell & Sons, 1908).

Preface, foreword, introduction, or similar part of a book

1. James Rieger, introduction to *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xx–xxi.

2. Rieger, introduction, xxxiii.

3. Rieger, James. Introduction to *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, xi–xxxvii. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Journal article

Article in a print journal

In a note, list the specific page numbers consulted, if any. In the bibliography, list the page range for the whole article.

1. Joshua I. Weinstein, “The Market in Plato’s *Republic*,” *Classical Philology* 104 (2009): 440.

2. Weinstein, “Plato’s *Republic*,” 452–53.

3. Weinstein, Joshua I. “The Market in Plato’s *Republic*.” *Classical Philology* 104 (2009): 439–58.

Article in a newspaper or popular magazine

Newspaper and magazine articles may be cited in running text (“As Sheryl Stolberg and Robert Pear noted in a *New York Times* article on February 27, 2010, . . .”) instead of in a note, and they are commonly omitted from a bibliography. The following examples show the more formal versions of the citations. If you consulted the article online, include a URL; include an access date only if your publisher or discipline requires one. If no author is identified, begin the citation with the article title.

1. Daniel Mendelsohn, “But Enough about Me,” *New Yorker*, January 25, 2010, 68.

1. Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Robert Pear, “Wary Centrists Posing Challenge in Health Care Vote,” *New York Times*, February 27, 2010, accessed February 28, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28health.html.

2. Mendelsohn, “But Enough about Me,” 69.

2. Stolberg and Pear, “Wary Centrists.”

3. Mendelsohn, Daniel. “But Enough about Me.” *New Yorker*, January 25, 2010.

3. Stolberg, Sheryl Gay, and Robert Pear. “Wary Centrists Posing Challenge in Health Care Vote.” *New York Times*, February 27, 2010. Accessed February 28, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28health.html.

Book review

1. David Kamp, “Deconstructing Dinner,” review of *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, by Michael Pollan, *New York Times*, April 23, 2006, Sunday Book Review, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/23/books/review/23kamp.html.

2. Kamp, “Deconstructing Dinner.”

3. Kamp, David. “Deconstructing Dinner.” Review of *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, by Michael Pollan. *New York Times*, April 23, 2006, Sunday Book Review. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/23/books/review/23kamp.html.

Thesis or dissertation

1. Mihwa Choi, “Contesting *Imaginaires* in Death Rituals during the Northern Song Dynasty” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008).

2. Choi, “Contesting *Imaginaires*.”

3. Choi, Mihwa. “Contesting *Imaginaires* in Death Rituals during the Northern Song Dynasty.” PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008.

Paper presented at a meeting or conference

1. Rachel Adelman, “ ‘Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On’: God’s Footstool in the Aramaic Targumim and Midrashic Tradition” (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Society of Biblical Literature, New Orleans, Louisiana, November 21–24, 2009).

2. Adelman, “Such Stuff as Dreams.”

3.Adelman, Rachel. “ ‘Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On’: God’s Footstool in the Aramaic Targumim and Midrashic Tradition.” Paper presented at the annual meeting for the Society of Biblical Literature, New Orleans, Louisiana, November 21–24, 2009.

Lecture or Seminar notes

1. John Smith, “The Origins of WWI.” Lecture delivered for History 202, University of Canterbury, August 15, 2011.

2. Smith, “The Origins of WWI.”

3. Smith, John, “The Origins of WWI.” Lecture delivered for History 202, University of Canterbury, August 15, 2011.

Course Reader

1. History 202 Course Reader, “Europe: 1900-1945.” (Christchurch: University of Canterbury Copy and Print, 2011).

2. History 202 Course Reader: pp. 55-6.

3. History 202 Course Reader, “Europe: 1900-1945.” (Christchurch: University of Canterbury Copy and Print, 2011).

Item in a commercial database
For items retrieved from a commercial database, add the name of the database and an accession number following the facts of publication. In this example, the dissertation cited above is shown as it would be cited if it were retrieved from ProQuest’s database for dissertations and theses.

Choi, Mihwa. “Contesting *Imaginaires* in Death Rituals during the Northern Song Dynasty.” PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008. ProQuest (AAT 3300426).

Common Footnote Abbreviations (Latin):

c.	*circa*	=	about
cf.	*confer*	=	compare with
etc.	*et cetera*	=	and the rest
et.seq.	*et sequential*	=	and what follows
ibid.	*ibidem*	=	in the same place
i.e.	*idest*	=	that is
n.b.	*nota bene*	=	note well: important
op.cit.	*opere citato*	=	in the work cited
q.v.	*quod vide*	=	which see (i.e. look it up!)
viz.	*vide licet*	=	namely, or in other words

Note also the usage of these familiar abbreviations:

B.C.	=	before Christ
A.D.	=	Anno Domini (in the year of Our Lord)
C.E.	=	Common Era

44B.C. 1066C.E. BUT: A.D.1588
fi. or fior.*floruit* = flourished, alive at this time

Electronic Sources

The Internet provides a wealth of resources to Historians. Virtually all journals now publish a digital edition, and E-books are becoming increasingly commonplace. There are also a wide variety of professional historical associations and universities which publish online. But as with more ‘traditional’ sources, some caution must be exercised in the selection and use of online material.

A Note on Wikipedia

One of the first online resources to which many students turn is Wikipedia. With millions of articles on all faucets of history, this website might seem like a perfect source of information. But there are two reasons why students should not rely on Wikipedia for essay research. Firstly, the website is not academic; it is open source. While the online community that runs Wikipedia has become more rigorous in its fact-checking, the overall quality of many articles remains questionable. Second, Wikipedia articles tend to be reasonably brief on detail. A student might discover much about the *chronology* of events during the American Revolution, but little in the way of *critical analysis* of its causes and consequences.

Wikipedia should be considered a GATEWAY to scholarly sources. Often the references at the end of an article are more useful that the article itself. Use these in your research instead. The golden rule: do not cite Wikipedia in any footnote references or in your bibliography!

Social Media

The rapid proliferation of social media adds another dimension to online research. We typically use sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn and YouTube to share information, photos, videos and links with family and friends. But academia has also established a presence on social media websites. Journals, publishing companies, universities and individual writers increasingly utilise social media to promote their products, announce new courses and preview upcoming book releases.

Like Wikipedia, social media can serve as a useful *gateway* to good scholarship. Students might, for instance, follow a prominent author on Twitter; receiving Tweets about new books or articles by that writer. Or they might seek to join a group associated with a particular university or a journal on LinkedIn. Once again, the aim is to attain access to reliable scholarship. Students should NOT reference social media sites in their essays, unless their work involves the direct quotation and analysis of posts and blogs.

Using and Citing Electronic Sources

In general, sources from a website ending in .edu or edu.au or ac.uk or ac.nz may be considered reputable. These are sites operated by tertiary education institutions in the US, Australia, UK and New Zealand. As with publishers, the well-known universities such as Oxford, Harvard, Cambridge, Yale, Princeton or London are likely to be the most reliable.

Academic sites are rigorously checked for the accuracy of their information and the quality of their scholarship. There are many other internet sites that are operated by

groups or individuals promoting specific political, religious or social agendas. Their presentation of facts and ideas may not be entirely free from distortion.

When citing online material, the same principles apply as in printed books and articles. The whole point of a footnote or citation is to enable the reader to find the same source and check the accuracy of the author's use of the information. In most cases, simply add the URL to the standard citation of author, title, date, with a date of access.

Website

1. "Google Privacy Policy," last modified March 1, 2012, http://www.google.com/policies/privacy/.

2. "McDonald's Happy Meal Toy Safety Facts," McDonald's Corporation, accessed July 19, 2008, http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/about/factsheets.html.

2. "Google Privacy Policy."
2. "Toy Safety Facts."

3. Google. "Google Privacy Policy." Last modified March 1, 2012. http://www.google.com/policies/privacy/.

3. McDonald's Corporation. "McDonald's Happy Meal Toy Safety Facts." Accessed July 19, 2008. http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/about/factsheets.html.

Book published electronically
If a book is available in more than one format, cite the version you consulted. For books consulted online, list a URL; include an access date only if one is required by your publisher or discipline. If no fixed page numbers are available, you can include a section title or a chapter or other number.

1. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2007), Kindle edition.

1. Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner, eds., *The Founders' Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), accessed February 28, 2010, http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/.

2. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*.

2. Kurland and Lerner, *Founder's Constitution*, chap. 10, doc. 19.

3. Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2007. Kindle edition.

3. Kurland, Philip B., and Ralph Lerner, eds. *The Founders' Constitution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. Accessed February 28, 2010. http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/.

Article in an online journal
Include a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) if the journal lists one. A DOI is a permanent ID that, when appended to http://dx.doi.org/ in the address bar of an Internet browser, will lead to the source. If no DOI is available, list a URL. Include an access date only if one is required by your publisher or discipline.

1. Gueorgi Kossinets and Duncan J. Watts, "Origins of Homophily in an Evolving Social Network," *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (2009): 411, accessed February 28, 2010, doi:10.1086/599247.

2. Kossinets and Watts, "Origins of Homophily," 439.

3. Kossinets, Gueorgi, and Duncan J. Watts. "Origins of Homophily in an Evolving Social Network." *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (2009): 405–50. Accessed February 28, 2010. doi:10.1086/599247.

Blog entry or comment
Blog entries or comments may be cited in running text ("In a comment posted to *The Becker-Posner Blog* on February 23, 2010, . . .") instead of in a note, and they are commonly omitted from a bibliography. The following examples show the more formal versions of the citations. There is no need to add *pseud.* after a fictitious or informal name.

1. Jack, February 25, 2010 (7:03 p.m.), comment on Richard Posner, "Double Exports in Five Years?," *The Becker-Posner Blog*, February 21, 2010, http://uchicagolaw.typepad.com/beckerposner/2010/02/double-exports-in-five-years-posner.html.

2. Jack, comment on Posner, "Double Exports."
Becker-Posner Blog, *The*. http://uchicagolaw.typepad.com/beckerposner/.

E-mail or text message
E-mail and text messages may be cited in running text ("In a text message to the author on March 1, 2010, John Doe revealed . . .") instead of in a note, and they are rarely listed in a bibliography. The following example shows the more formal version of a note.

1. John Doe, e-mail message to author, February 28, 2010.

Formal Requirements

Paper-copy essays must be typed on A4 size paper, using one side only, and preferably double-spaced. For electronic submission follow the instructions for your course on Learn.

Please number all the pages (including bibliography) in the top right corner.

Please leave a double margin to allow room for the marker's comments (4cm from left edge of page).

Fasten the pages with *one* staple in the top left corner.

Make sure that the cover sheet or first page of your essay has your own name, the course code, your tutor's name and the number of your tutorial group.

Fold your essay lengthwise and place in the appropriate essay slot outside the level 4 Humanities Office. DO NOT slide it under your tutor's door, or hand it to a lecturer, as the secretary has to date-stamp all essays and mark them as received on a class list.

Essays must have a bibliography and a reasonable number of footnotes (at least a dozen for a 1500 word essay). Footnotes should be numbered consecutively through the essay as a whole, with small-size numerals. DO NOT use asterisks or other symbols.

Essays must conform to the prescribed word-limit; nor should they fall far short of the limit. The word-limit applies to the text or main body of your essay it does not include footnotes or bibliography. Most markers will allow a margin of up to 50 words either side of the limit without penalty, but essays which exceed the limit by 100 words or more gain an unfair advantage, and will be penalised (See your course guide for the specific penalties). Be careful that your word-count applies only to the main text.

Essays must be submitted on or before the due date, unless your tutor or the course convenor has previously granted you a formal extension. The grounds for an extension are limited to illness or personal crisis (such as the death of a close family member), and must be supported by a doctor's certificate or a letter from Student Health or a registered social worker or counsellor. (Pressure of work in other courses is NOT an acceptable ground for an extension.) If you think you may need an extension, you must apply to your tutor or course convener *well before the due date*.

Late Essays: Essays submitted after the due date without prior extension will incur penalties. Your tutor has discretion to deduct one grade for every three days the essay is overdue. Alternatively, the essay may be received (to satisfy the coursework requirement) but not graded. This means that it will count for zero in the compilation of your coursework grade. Late essays will not be received beyond the date on which that essay has been returned to the rest of the class.

Appendices

1.
Presentation Checklist

Check your footnotes and bibliography: are they set out in the *Chicago Style* (footnotes) detailed in this guide?

Review the range of sources cited in the bibliography, and how much use has been made of them in the footnotes. For a first-year-essay, you should have a minimum of six sources and twelve footnotes, preferably more.

Check your introduction: does it set out clearly:

(a) the issues raised by the question,
(b) definitions of any key terms or concepts,
(c) the approach or line of argument you propose to follow?

Does the essay have a logical sequence of main points (i.e. a clear structure) which the reader can follow easily?

- is there too much detail, or not enough examples to support the main points?
- are the ideas clearly expressed or are some sentences too vague or ambiguous?
- do the paragraphs have obvious topic-sentences or conclusions?
- are there too many *short* paragraphs?

Check your grammar, spelling and punctuation (or get someone who is good at these things to check it *with* you).

Is the essay convincing, or does it seem too one-sided or incomplete?

Does the essay have a strong conclusion which gives a convincing answer to the question.

> 'What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.'
>
> Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

2.
Key Terms Used in Essay Questions

Compare:	Look for similar features, characteristics or elements in common.
Contrast:	Look for dissimilarities, differences or contradictions.
Critique:	Critical appraisal or assessment of an argument or theory; requires a judgment as to its correctness on merit.
Define:	Concise, clear meaning or explanation of a key term or concept, usually goes beyond the bare dictionary definition.
Describe:	Systematic portrayal of main features or characteristics.
Discuss:	Does NOT mean general description or vague ramble around a topic, requires you to identify a key problem or debate, and to analyse pros and cons in a reasoned argument, reaching a firm conclusion.
Evaluate:	Requires critical assessment of an argument or theory, and a judgement based on evidence of its merit or correctness.
Explain:	Clarify and interpret a problem or event, answering the questions 'how' and 'why'.
Justify:	Offer arguments and evidence to support a proposition while refuting opposing arguments.
Outline:	Systematic description of an event, work or argument to indicate significant features.
Refute:	Offer arguments and evidence to disprove a proposition.
Review:	Systematic description of a number of events, works or arguments, with critical comment.
Summarise:	Give main points, facts or ideas concisely, without elaboration or detail.

'The one duty we owe to History is to rewrite it.'

Oscar Wilde

3.
Assessment

The History Department uses an assessment sheet, which not only gives the final grade and some written comments from the marker but also indicates your strengths and weaknesses under a range of headings such as structure, analysis, prose, references, etc. The assessment sheet is therefore a very useful *diagnostic aid*, to help you improve in your next essay. Read it carefully, along with any marginal comments the marker may have made in the course of reading your essay. If you don't understand any remarks, or feel that you have been marked unfairly, please see your tutor as soon as possible. If you still remain unconvinced or aggrieved, see the course convener.

What do the grades mean?

Your marks in History essays, tests and exams will not be given in percentages; it is hard to justify such a precise measure of 'rightness' in a literary subject. Instead, we use the same grade system as the University, to accustom you to the form in which your final results will appear. Here are some informal explanations:

A+ 90-100	EXCEPTIONAL:	outstanding, superb!
A 85-89	EXCELLENT:	First Class work: mature, literate, complete, coherent, perceptive. High level analytical skills and mastery of material. Sound judgement.
A- 80-84	BORDERLINE A:	(Better than B+ but not quite A).
B+ 75-79	VERY GOOD:	Clear signs of intelligence and ability: valid arguments, sound conclusions, but may lack perception or full coverage. At Honours, B+ means Second Class, Division One.
B 70-74	GOOD:	Sound and capable, grasps the question well, tries to answer it with relevant material, but lacks full coverage, perception or analytical skills. At honours, B means Second Class, Division Two. (B is our threshold for entry to the Honours programme)
B- 65-69	BORDERLINE	Better than C+ but not quite B; promising but incomplete.
C+ 60-64	COMPETENT:	Average, ordinary, limited in more than one aspect: question only partly grasped;

		has some basic points, but lacks detail, depth, development. (Much room for improvement! - yet shows signs of ability to make that improvement.)
C 55-59	MARGINAL PASS:	Large gaps, weak grasp of question, poorly expressed, feeble conclusions: barely adequate.
C- 50-54	RESTRICTED PASS:	Meets minimum requirements; contains notable shortcomings in argument, style and references.
D 40-49	FAIL:	Serious deficiencies: fails to see point of question, illiterate, lacking footnotes or bibliography.
E 0-39	FAIL:	Seriously illiterate, incoherent, irrelevant or incomplete.

Remember that an essay is a learning exercise. Don't let it fill your mind to the exclusion of all else. You need to manage your time wisely and keep a balance between work and recreation if you are to keep a healthy mind in a healthy body! Getting a C grade is always a disappointment, but it should never feel like the end of the world. Treat it as an opportunity to learn how to improve. Always read the marker's comments, and make an effort to correct any mistaken approaches in your next essay.

If you are keen to get better grades, enquire at the Learning Skills Centre. For a modest fee, you will get personal tuition and be shown how to rectify weaknesses and to build on your strengths.

4.

Example of Essay Grading Sheet

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY: ESSAY COMMENTS AND MARK

(To be photocopied and returned to students)

COURSE	
STUDENT	
ESSAY	
MARKED BY	

	Very good A+ / A	Good A- / B+	Fair B / B-	Marginal pass C+ / C	Restricted Pass C-	Fail D / E
Structure						
Analysis						
Knowledge						
Evidence						
Prose						
References						
COMMENTS						

Mark:

Further Reading

J. Anderson and Millicent Poole, *Assignment & Thesis Writing*, 4th ed. (New York: Wiley, 2001)
LB 2369 .A547 (Education Library)

Jeremy Black and Donald MacRaild, *Studying History* (London: Macmillan, 1997)
D 16.2 .B627

Keith S. Folse et al, *Great Essays: An Introduction to Writing Essays* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004)
808.4076 FOL (Education Library)

Bryan Greetham, *How to Write Better Essays*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2008)
PE 1429 .G816