

QM Psychology - Essay writing workshop - 18/10/21 - Q&A answers

- **Where would you recommend starting? i.e is it best to write the introduction last after you know for definite which points will follow?**

There isn't one fixed place to start writing, but in general for an essay it will likely be useful to know where you are going before trying to finalise your introduction. So you can start with a fairly basic introduction that just has your main thesis statement, before going on to work on the body of your essay where you expand on all of the points that link together to form your argument. Once you have those, you can then go back to your introduction and also write the conclusion, as those will make more sense when you know the whole story. What can be really helpful here as well is having an outline of the essay (doesn't have to be long, can even be bullet points), where you briefly state your argument or your main points that you are trying to make. So before starting with anything else, that way you know where you are going.

- **Best way to split time during timed-essays (planning, writing, conclusion..)**

Definitely start by giving yourself some time to plan out what you are going to say, and don't just dive straight in. Especially for timed essays it is important to think about what you're going to say and how you will make those points before you start writing. Then once you have an idea of that, start actually writing things down. Exactly how much time you spend on each will depend on how quickly you write once you know what you want to say, and how detailed you need to be in your plans before you can start on writing things down. Make sure to leave some time to proofread and double check what you've written.

- **having a clear judgement on what your final response towards the essay question is needed, but are we allowed to use rigid terms like "absolutely incorrect" "completely wrong" or do we stick to saying stuff like "this is largely incorrect" ect.?**

If you can argue why something is absolutely correct/incorrect, then it is possible to use those terms. However, in any of the questions you will be set as essay questions, there very likely won't be a strictly yes/no answer, so be careful that you support your opinion or argument for why something is correct or not. It has to convince the reader, so if you can show why something is wrong or not convincing, then that works.

- **How many paragraphs are needed?**

This doesn't have one fixed answer: this will depend on how long your paragraphs are. Generally speaking, you will need a separate paragraph for each main point you are making.

- ***Would you suggest that we stick to the PEEL order of structuring essays in order to achieve the higher marks or would we need to expand on that**

PEEL (Point, Evidence, Explanation, Link) is an excellent way of structuring your paragraphs in an essay as it will make it clear for the reader how everything you are saying relates to the essay question and the argument you are trying to make. There is no need to do anything more special than that to get high marks, as the structure itself isn't the only thing that determines your mark: it's all the other categories of the marking scheme that we talked through earlier today.

- **You said for and against is not enough, so what is enough?**

This very much depends on how you show your for and against: you want to make sure you don't just list all the points in favour and all the points against, and then add them up to a conclusion (as if numerically). You want to take a bit more time than that, and show why the points in favour are more important, or why those against weigh more heavily. On the whole, it is possible to get a good mark with for/against, but it is reliant on you showing critical evaluation and analysis of the points you mention.

- **How many citations and references should generally be used for a closed book essay?**

This doesn't have one fixed answer: you should draw on as many resources you think will help you address the essay question and meet the criterion of depth and breadth. Remember the tree metaphor we used in the session. You will not be able to list all relevant work, but also simply listing studies to have a long reference list doesn't help. You must explain and analyse the evidence. We will give you an example: an exam essay with 7 references could be graded (and has been graded) with 45% and a 68%. It is more a matter of quality of resources and how you treat them, rather than quantity.

- **For an exam essay do we need to write the full reference? or can we just cite the author**

For exam essays, you should include appropriate in-text citations to cite existing resources you have used (e.g., According to Brekelmans (2018) there is no critical period when learning a second language). There is no requirement to include the full reference list, but you can as well do, to practise your skills. But you will not be downgraded/receive more grades if you don't/do include the full list. For coursework essays, you should include an appropriate list of references as well as in-text citations.

- **How many paragraphs in an exam essay and how long do we have?**

For paragraphs please see answer above. For essay-based exams, you will have 24 hours to submit your essay upon release of the essay questions (you are not expected to use all 24 hours!). You should have revised way before you see the essay questions, and you should treat it as an in-class exam (e.g., make sure you block a 2 hours window to gather your thoughts and write your essay). For coursework essays there is a pre-specified submission deadline, but make sure you plan your time well in advance.