

# Essay Writing for Science Subjects

# Before the Exam

- ▶ Revision styles
- ▶ Extra reading
- ▶ Past papers
- ▶ Group revision vs. independent revision
- ▶ Practice essay writing

# What might they ask you?

- ▶ Describe...
- ▶ Compare and contrast...
- ▶ Explain...

# To plan or not to plan?

- ▶ Spider diagrams/ 'a' map
- ▶ List
- ▶ Flow chart
- ▶ None?

# Introduction

- ▶ Background
- ▶ Summary
- ▶ Longer than conclusion
- ▶ “Tell them what you’re going to tell them”

# Main body

- ▶ Answer the question
- ▶ Structure
- ▶ Paragraphing
  - ▶ Sequential
  - ▶ One point per paragraph
- ▶ Depth and breadth
- ▶ Examples
- ▶ Diagrams

# Conclusion

- ▶ Summary
- ▶ Short
- ▶ “Tell them what you’ve told them”
  - ▶ Not repetition
- ▶ Future perspectives
- ▶ What don’t we know?

# General Advice

What to avoid:

- ▶ Long and flowery introductions.
- ▶ Repeating the question. If the question is “Define the 4 features of X and why their function is important”, don’t write “X has 4 main features, and their functions are important. These are...”.
- ▶ Don’t talk about yourself. “I think”, “I am saying”, “I will show that”. Say “It can be shown” or “This can be interpreted to mean”. It’s obviously your interpretation, you are writing it.
- ▶ Don’t describe what you are describing. “I will now describe the following features of X”. Just describe X.
- ▶ Don’t repeat information in reverse. Avoid writing “There are four feature of X”, describing them and finishing with “...and these are the four features of X” at the end of the same 2 or 3 sentence.
- ▶ Try to avoid repetition of phrases. “Another point / idea / function is...”. Instead “A further function is”, “The next function to be considered is”, “X is another key function, “In addition, function X”, “Furthermore, X” and so on.
- ▶ Avoid ‘believe’ like the plague. Ideas can be supported, though of, understood to be, have a consensus behind, be agreed upon and others, but not believed. It’s even worse when you say it about other people “Smith et al. believe that X...”.
- ▶ <https://archosaurmusings.wordpress.com/2011/05/25/advice-to-students-writing-science-essays-and-answering-exams/>

By Dr. David Hone



# General Advice

- ▶ Essay length
- ▶ Referencing
- ▶ Time
- ▶ Handwriting
- ▶ Variability between modules

	All Levels			Levels 5 - 6 (Desirable in other years)	Level 6
	Evidence of Comprehension	Breadth and Depth of Knowledge	Irrelevant Material and Errors	Synthesis & Balance	Originality & Innovation
<b>A+</b>	Outstanding. Deep insight	Outstanding. As much as could be expected	Absent or minimal	Evidence of critical analysis	Original ideas and insight
<b>A</b>	Clear understanding. Shrewd and appropriate	Extensive. Almost as much as could be expected	Minimal or absent	Astute selection and juxtaposition	Some evidence of creative interpretation
<b>A-</b>	Tending to description rather than interpretation	Extensive	Minimal	Appropriate selection and combination	Some
<b>A--</b>	Sufficient to marshal a well-organised, direct response	Most key points but not extensive	Perhaps some minor errors and tangential material	Inappropriate balance, partial synthesis	Limited
<b>B</b>	Sufficient to marshal an organised, direct response	Not all key points but comprehensive and accurate	Some minor errors and tangential material	Inappropriate balance, partial synthesis	Limited
<b>C</b>	Not a direct response but sufficient for a logical presentation.	Several omissions but some key points	Some errors, tangential material	Minimal	Minimal
<b>D,E</b>	Poor comprehension, muddled organisation	Major omissions. No key points. A few basic facts	Major factual errors. Frequently irrelevant	None	None
<b>F+</b>	Almost none	One or two very minor points correct	Extensively irrelevant or wrong	None	None
<b>F</b>	None	One or two very minor points just about correct	Extensively irrelevant or wrong	None	None
<b>F-</b>	None	No evidence of being better if longer	Almost all irrelevant or wrong	None	None
<b>O</b>	Nothing written	Nothing written	Nothing written	None	None

# QMUL Resources

- ▶ Workshops:  
[http://my.qmul.ac.uk/news\\_and\\_events/2016/171673.html](http://my.qmul.ac.uk/news_and_events/2016/171673.html)
- ▶ Drop-in sessions:  
<http://www.learningdevelopment.qmul.ac.uk/node/81>
- ▶ General exam season advice:  
[http://my.qmul.ac.uk/news\\_and\\_events/2016/176373.html#Writingandstudyguidance](http://my.qmul.ac.uk/news_and_events/2016/176373.html#Writingandstudyguidance)
- ▶ Past papers:  
<http://www.learningdevelopment.qmul.ac.uk/node/81>  
or in your modules (SBCS Specimen Examination Papers)

Questions?