

On Writing and Marking Essay

One of the reasons for these essays is to dig more deeply into the body of knowledge of yoga. One element of this is knowing and understanding the material in the texts. Another element of this is to consider what your own beliefs are and how you incorporate this material into your belief structures, daily living and practice – much more meaningful.

This text is aimed at general points on writing essays and how they are marked.

Essays should be a minimum of 1000 words.

Essay grades will be either ‘Pass’ or ‘Referral’. Referral will mean that the essay will need to be reworked as indicated and resubmitted in order to get a ‘Pass’.

Essays tend to be in several parts - some asking questions, some inviting discussion. Essays should answer all of the question, ideally making a sound case for any arguments and interpretations you make, supported by appropriate references. Obviously, when referring to your own beliefs and opinions, it is quite valid to say they are your beliefs and opinions.

For some people this course may be the first time since school days that you encounter a need to write an essay. For some this is daunting. But I don’t think it needs to be. There are guidelines on format and structure. But hopefully you are investigating, researching and talking about a subject that interests you. Show that interest, show that passion. An essay isn’t a work of fiction, nor is it just describing terms, nor is it simply copying out what someone else has said. In any effective writing, you need to successfully communicate what is required to be communicated. You might produce a stunningly impressive piece of writing – but if it does not answer the question it is not much use. If you write it in such a way that the intended audience can’t read it, again, it is not much use. In this kind of essay, a key element is answering the question. Usually there is research to be done, to build your knowledge of the subject you are working on. Then you can use that knowledge to make logical arguments. As you are researching it is useful to record key facts and quotes, along with where you found those quotes. If you make an assertion about what someone said, or what some specific text says, show the reference. A part of making a logical argument is making an assertion and supporting it by some evidence. Otherwise it is just your opinion. There are times when saying what your opinion is is right and relevant – and when you do, say so. At other times an argument needs to be made to back up what you are saying, supported by evidence.

Guidelines

Page Format

The font should be Times New Roman, 12 pt, with 25mm margins, with page numbers in the page footer on the right. Write the essay title at the top of the first page, with the first letter of all main words capitalised. The title is usually in bold.

After the title, write your essay, usually with an introduction, the body and a conclusion.

Lastly, on a new page after your conclusion, write your references and bibliography (see below), listing all of the books, texts and sources you have used to find your essay material.

References and Bibliography

A bibliography is a list of all the books, texts and sources you have used to find your essay material. A Reference List is a list of sources to which you are making references in your essay. For our essays a single list of both References and Bibliography is fine. This is listed alphabetically by author, and it goes at the end of your essay. It does have a format – Author Surname, Initials or names, title of the publication (in italics), publisher, publication location, publication date.

Example

Desikachar, TKV, *The Heart of Yoga - Developing a Personal Practice*, Inner Tradition International, Rochester, Vermont, 1995

Using References

There are different ways of doing this, and opinions vary. For our essays, we use the format author name, date, page number. For example,

... in considering the effects of pranayama and the link between the breath and the mind, Desikachar says (Desikachar, TKV, 1995, p 56), “The link between mind and breath is most significant. The Yoga Sutras say that when we practice pranayama the veil is gradually drawn away from the mind and there is growing clarity”.

You have identified where the quote came from. The reader, if they want to dig deeper, can go to that book and that page, and find that reference for themselves. Any point or argument or assertion that you might be making relating to the significance of the link between the breath and the mind is backed up with evidence from an expert in this field.

In our essays, you can use references to specific texts by a chapter and verse number. For example, in the Yoga Sutras [1:2] we see, “*Yoga citta vritti nirodaha*”. This defines what yoga is. Yoga is the absence (*nirodaha*) of waves or ripples (*vritti*) of thinking in the mind / consciousness (*citta*).

Some publishers and organisations use the term ‘citation’ to mean ‘reference’.

Essay Marking Rubric

The table below provides a general sense of how essays are graded. These principles remain the same whatever the subject. Every effort is taken to make grading as transparent as possible. Also, allowances are made for people who might find this hard going - like people with dyslexia, or those having English as a second language. Don't stress about it, just do the best that you can.

Grade	Research	Argument (Intro/ Conclusion)	Analysis (Body of Paper)	Clarity	Format
Pass	Research has been done and the sources are from recognised texts. Ideally it is your own research.	There is a clear structure to the essay, with an introduction (saying what you will be talking about), the body of the essay, and a conclusion (summarising what you have said and tying it all together)	There is a clear body to the essay – all of the questions are answered in a logical way, with the arguments you are making clearly supported by appropriate and relevant references.	The paper is easy to read, and the analysis is clear. The language is easy to understand, and specific terms are explained. Arguments are clearly laid out and are both well defined and well supported. The points being made link together into a cohesive whole. All of the question is answered.	Times New Roman, 12 pt, 25mm margins with page numbers. The essay title is clear. Citations and references are clear, consistent and follow the course standards. The bibliography follows the course standards.

Referral	There is little evidence of research done. What is done is shallow or unoriginal.	There is no clear structure to the essay, no introduction and/or no conclusion. Nothing is tied together, in any logical, cohesive way.	The questions are not answered. There are no arguments made and those that are are not supported by any researched evidence. Or the text is just descriptive with no arguments being made.	The language is unclear, and difficult to follow. There are significant spelling and grammatical errors. The logic is unclear and does not hang together. The points being made are not linked together. Terms are used and not explained. The question, or parts of it are not answered.	Guidelines on the format of text layout are not followed. Guidelines on use of references and citations are not followed. Guidelines on bibliography are not followed.
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