



# ACE Quick Guide to Writing Essays and Academic Reports

## Introduction

You will complete assignments with different requirements throughout your degree apprenticeship. Two common types of assignments are **essays** and **academic reports**.

**Essays** are usually divided into a **small number of broad sections**, and focus on building a sustained, evaluative argument which develops from one part of the assignment to the next.

An **academic report**, however, is often divided into a **series of sections or subsections**, each of which provides a detailed analysis of a different specific topic.

## Differences between Essays and Academic Reports

The table and structures below show the **standard differences** between **essays and academic reports**. However, the content of your specific assignment will also depend on your discipline, the purpose of your work, and your audience. You should therefore **always check what you need to do** in your course and module handbooks and **clarify this with your lecturer if unsure**.

Essays	Academic Reports
Essays do not usually have an abstract or executive summary.	Reports may have an abstract or executive summary (check with your lecturer!)
Essays do not usually include a table of contents.	Reports usually have a table of contents.
Essays are less likely to be divided into sections.	Reports are divided into headed sections and sometimes sub-sections.
Essays do not usually include tables, charts, or diagrams.	A report will often contain tables, charts and diagrams.
The use of bullet points is not acceptable in an essay.	The use of bullet points may be acceptable in a report (check with your lecturer!)

(Adapted from Cottrell, 2003, p. 209)

## The Structure of Essays

### **Introduction**

Your introduction contextualises and gives background information about the topic being explored and sets out what the essay is going to cover.



### **Main body**

Your main body is divided into paragraphs. Each paragraph transitions into the next to make a continuous, flowing text.



### **Conclusion**

The conclusion summarises the main points made in the essay. Avoid introducing new information in your conclusion.



### **Reference list**

This is a list of the sources explicitly engaged with in your main body, presented alphabetically by authors' surname or corporate author.



### **Appendices**

This is the section of your assignment where you include supplementary information or unpublished material as evidence to support your main argument, such as documentation on your company's intranet.



## The Structure of Academic Reports

### **Abstract or Executive Summary**

This is a summary of the report. It is usually the last thing you write.



### **Table of Contents**

Your table of contents shows the number of each report section, alongside its title, page number and any sub-sections.



### **Introduction**

Your introduction contextualises and gives background information about the topic being explored and sets out what the academic report is going to cover.



### **Main Body**

The main body of your assignment is divided into sections and subsections under headings and subheadings.



### **Conclusion**

This may be a main conclusion or mini-conclusion for each section, depending on the assignment.



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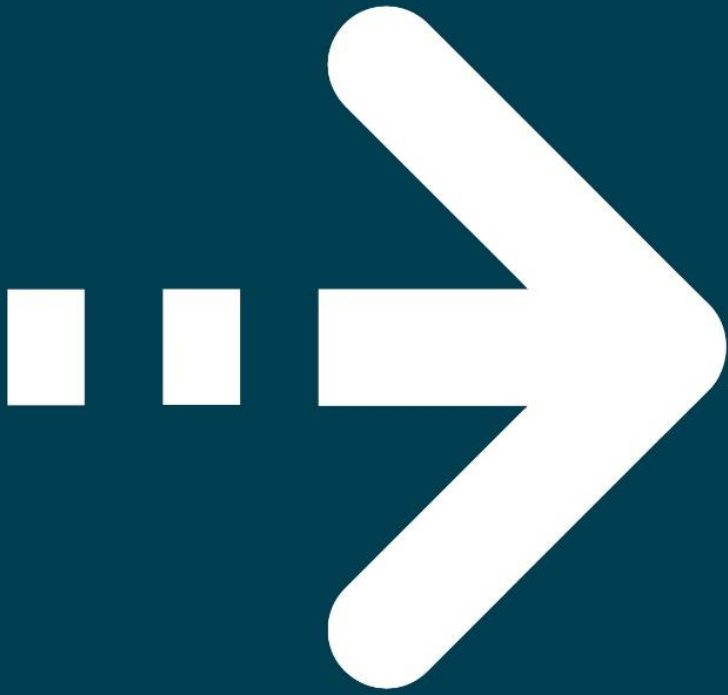
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## Reference List

Cottrell, S. (2003). *The Study Skills Handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.



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