

# An essay checklist

If you have time, leave your draft for a few days before revising it. Then ask yourself the following questions about the content, structure and style of your work.

## 1. Argument & ideas

### *Focus*

- Have you answered (all parts of) the question?
- Is the thesis or central theme of the paper clear?
- Is the purpose or goal of the paper clear?

### *Logical flow*

- Is there a series of clearly identifiable key points?
- Are all the points related to the central theme?
- Are all the points presented in a logical order?

### *Use of Evidence*

- Is each point supported by appropriate and reliable evidence?
- Have you analysed, as well as reported, the evidence?
- Have you considered opposing views?

### *Relevance*

- Is all the material relevant to the question?

### *Authorship*

- Is it written in your own words?
- Are other people's ideas acknowledged (referenced)?

## 2. Structure

### *Paragraphs*

- Does each paragraph focus on one main point?
- Does each sentence in the paragraph relate to the main point of the paragraph?
- Does each sentence follow on logically from the previous one?

### Flow

- Are there clear links between paragraphs and between sections?

### Introduction

- Does the introduction clearly identify the topic of the paper?
- Is there a clear thesis (or purpose) statement in the introduction?
- Does the introduction give the reader an idea about what is to follow?

### Conclusion

- Does the conclusion sum up the main points of the paper?
- Does the conclusion remind the reader of your thesis (or central theme)?
- Does the conclusion have a sense of finality?

## 3. Clarity & usage

### Clarity

- Is the meaning of each sentence clear?

### Accuracy

- Have you checked the grammar, punctuation and spelling?  
*(Have you used the computer spell check and then re-checked it yourself?  
Have you checked for the types of mistakes you commonly make?)*

### Style

- Is your writing concise?  
*(e.g. Have you avoided repetition? Have you avoided unnecessary jargon,  
 clichés and qualifiers?)*
- Have you followed the formal conventions of academic writing?  
*(e.g. Have you avoided contractions? Have you avoided informal  
vocabulary?)*

## 4. Presentation

- Are you within 10% of the word limit?
- Have you met the presentation requirements  
*(e.g. Have you included a title page? Have you used double spacing?)*
- Have you used the appropriate referencing style? (e.g. APA, Chicago)