

# ESSAYS, REPORTS, REFLECTIVE WRITING

Essays, reports and reflective writing are common forms of academic writing. They generally differ in these respects:

- purpose
- topic
- audience
- format
- style
- assessment

## Purpose

Essay	Report	Reflective writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To write a well-argued response to a question or proposition, using an analysis and discussion of the relevant literature</li> <li>• To establish a proposition (thesis)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To investigate, present and analyse information thoroughly and logically</li> <li>• Often to recommend action to solve a problem</li> <li>• Usually to make proposals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To record, the development of your ideas and insights and their implications for practice</li> <li>• To reflect on the content of the subject and on your own learning process</li> <li>• To analyse and discuss your responses to key concepts/issues from course work, reading, and/or practical placement, etc.</li> </ul>

## Topic

Essay	Report	Reflective writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually a question or proposition</li> <li>• Based on reading, sometimes fieldwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often a problem or case study; based on a real or hypothetical situation</li> <li>• Refers to readings, fieldwork or practical work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often a response to an aspect of a course: e.g. class/ studio/ lab, practical placement (WIL), and/or readings</li> <li>• Generally focuses on a particular aspect of course content and its potential application to theory and/or practice</li> </ul>

STUDY TIPS

**Audience**

Essay	Report	Reflective writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written for the lecturer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written for the audience established in the topic (a decision-maker, e.g. client, manager), but in reality your lecturer is also the audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written for yourself as a record of a learning experience (although your lecturer is also the audience in an assessment task)</li> </ul>

**Format**

Essay	Report	Reflective writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three parts: introduction, body conclusion</li> <li>No headings or sub-headings*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Divided into sections; sections vary according to type and length of report</li> <li>Contains headings and sub-headings which may be numbered</li> <li>May contain figures and tables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal format requirements, but often dated in a journal to trace the development of ideas, insights and learning</li> <li>Usually no headings; may be separated into sections if it suits the purpose</li> </ul>

**Style**

Essay	Report	Reflective writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal standard English using paragraphs and complete sentences</li> <li>Needs the objectivity suited to an academic argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal standard English</li> <li>Must be objective to reflect academic and professional context</li> <li>Point form sometimes used – to allow for easy access to key information; text often supported by figures and tables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard written English, using paragraphs and complete sentences; use of ‘I’ is permitted</li> <li>May be subjective to reflect your responses and interpretations</li> </ul>

**Assessment**

Essay	Report	Reflective writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Success depends on the argument: how each point relates to the thesis, and how well evidence is used from the literature to support the claims and main ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Success depends on the demonstration of good research and the objective presentation and analysis of information relevant to the purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Success depends on demonstration of insights into the course content, and developing awareness of inter-relationships and implications of different aspects of course content</li> </ul>

\* Some lecturers in business and nursing require headings – see relevant guides.