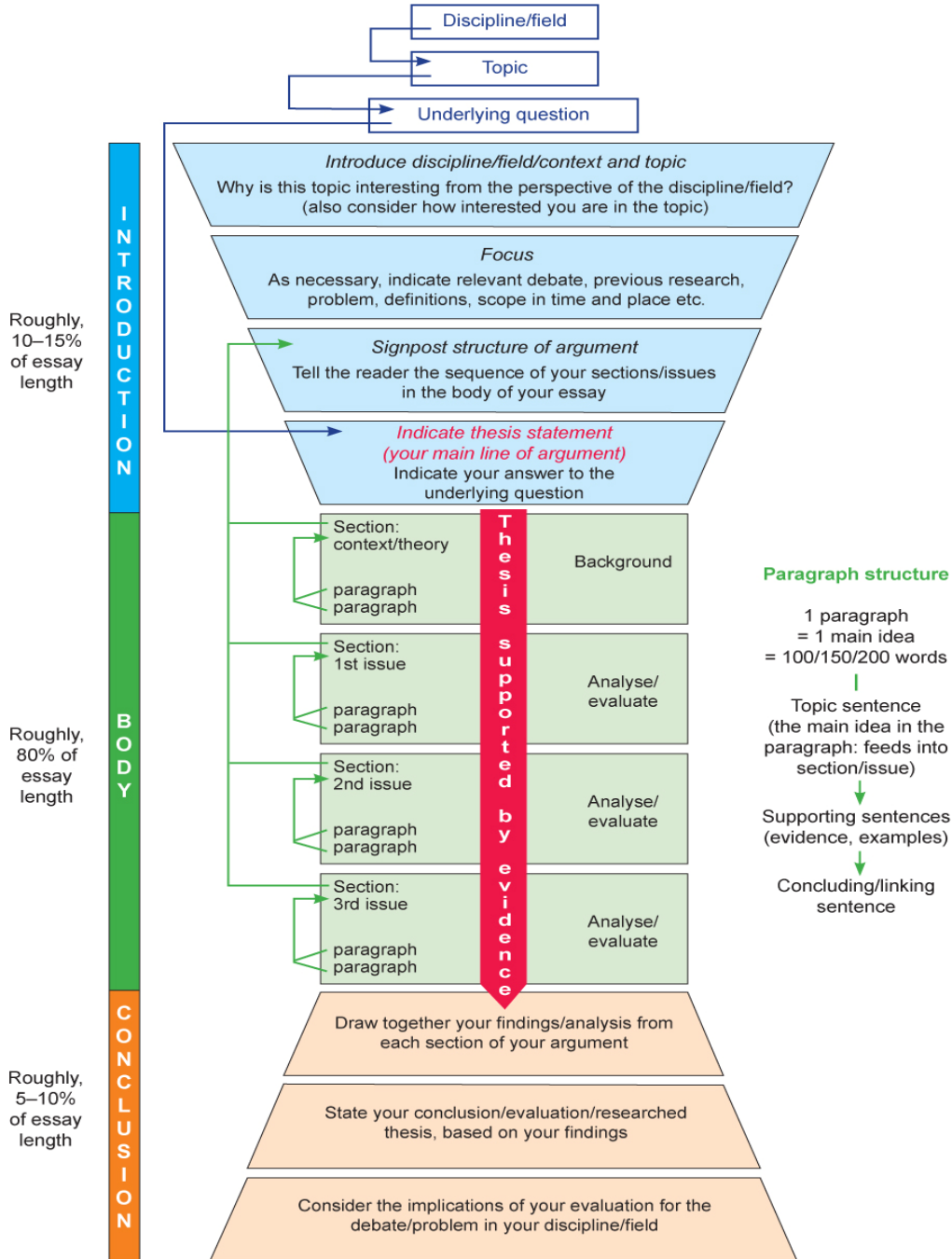


THE ESSAY – AN OVERVIEW

How effective structure supports reasoned argument in essays¹



¹ Read the assessment task carefully because a topic or discipline often requires a different structure. And always remember the golden 'creativity rule' – all rules are meant to be broken, it's just that you first need to know the rules!

THE DIAGRAM EXPLAINED

The standard essay

The diagram is an overview of a conventional essay written without headings. Different disciplines (e.g., engineering, psychology, education) and courses may have varying interpretations on the structure of the essay. Always consult carefully with the assignment tasks and exemplars provided by lecturers before you start to write your essay. When in doubt about the essay requirements ask your lecturer.

Topic

The topic is the task or question that has been set for you by your lecturer. It is always essential that you address exactly what is asked of you. Marks will not be given for a response that is not on the set topic regardless of how well written the assignment is. See the QUICK TIPS FOR STUDENTS on UNPACKING A QUESTION.

Underlying question

In an essay-style task, the lecturer usually wants more than an appropriate response to the task. The lecturer would usually like you to take a position on the topic. Based on your research, you are expected to support your position through evidence and discussion. The position is often called the **thesis statement** and its development in the body of the essay is called the **argument**.

Essay Structure

Introduction

This section is important as it is what the reader reads first. It should explain to the reader what your essay is about. See the QUICK TIPS FOR STUDENTS on WRITING AN ESSAY INTRODUCTION.

Body

The body of an essay is where your argument is developed. It should be written in correctly formed paragraphs. See the QUICK TIPS FOR STUDENTS on PARAGRAPH WRITING.

Conclusion

The conclusion draws your argument together. It is generally a shorter paragraph than the Introduction. It should restate the thesis statement, to leave the reader with your argued position in their minds. See the QUICK TIPS FOR STUDENTS on THE ESSAY BODY AND CONCLUSION.

RESOURCES

- Other QUICK TIPS FOR STUDENTS <http://www.usq.edu.au/learningcentre/tips/>
 - Essay – an overview
 - Paragraph writing
 - Writing an essay introduction
 - Essay body and conclusion
- Online resources:
<http://www.usq.edu.au/learningcentre/alongline/assessment/assign/assigntypes/essay.htm>
- Talk with a tutor at The Learning Centre (tlc@usq.edu.au)