

## THESIS STATEMENTS WITHIN AN ESSAY

### WHAT IS A THESIS STATEMENT?

- It tells the reader what the central argument is in response to the question or task.
- It clearly states which side of the argument you will be supporting.
- A thesis statement always asserts something. It is more than a description of what the essay is about or what you intend to do.
- The thesis statement should do more than restate the question. For example:

*‘This essay will outline the major factors responsible for unemployment in contemporary Australia’.*  
This is **NOT a thesis statement**, because it is an outline only and does not contain an argument.

*‘This essay will argue that government policy is the major cause of unemployment in contemporary Australia’.*  
This is **a thesis statement**, because it clearly states the argument.

*‘This essay will discuss sustainable development’.*  
This is **NOT a thesis statement**, because it does not assert anything or state a position.

*‘This essay will argue that sustainable development provides a practical framework for government policy’.*  
This is **a thesis statement**, because it asserts something.

### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THESIS STATEMENT AND THE QUESTION

Read through the following questions and thesis statements. Notice that the thesis statement answers the question and always contains an argument.

#### Question A

Assess the effectiveness of equal opportunity legislation in Australia in the period 1984-1996.

#### Thesis statement A

Equal opportunity legislation in Australia has done little to prevent discrimination in the workplace.

#### Question B

Critically examine the strategies available to community nurses in the area of domestic violence.

#### Thesis statement B

Community nurses currently have a range of successful strategies available to deal with victims of domestic violence but few strategies oriented to prevention.

## ACTIVITY

Read the following question and thesis statement.

### Question

Parents have different views about the benefits of mass immunisation. Discuss the arguments for and against mass immunisation presented in the literature.

### Thesis statement

This essay will present arguments for and against mass immunisation.

Evaluate the thesis statement by asking:

- Does the thesis statement do more than restate the question?
- Does it do more than say what the essay is about?

Suggest ways to improve the thesis statement?

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Rewrite the thesis statement in one sentence.

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To sum up, try to make sure that your thesis statement:

- presents the argument that seems most convincing to you from your research;
- is the central idea of your essay; and
- asserts something. This means that it is more than a topic or question.

## RESOURCES

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

The Learning Centre  
T: +61 7 4631 2751  
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