

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?

Rewrite the thesis statement in one sentence.

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)

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