

## Guidelines for Writing an Essay in Economics

This guide is aimed at helping you write an effective undergraduate economics essay. The guide offers advice on identifying the target audience, on how to do the formatting and to reference somebody's else documents. It provides also some miscellaneous helpful links to further resources. Following these suggestions will ensure that you write a coherent and well-structured essay.

First of all, you should consult and familiarize yourself with:

- the Economics Undergraduate marking criteria (See **Essay** folder on Blackboard)
- the advice and resources (direct and virtual) regarding academic writing and referencing available at My Learning Essentials,<sup>1</sup> the University Language Centre,<sup>2</sup> and on the Economic Study Skills page<sup>3</sup>
- we assume that you are familiar with basic writing skills, including grammar, sentence and paragraph structure. If you are not, then you should familiarize yourself with My Learning Essentials,<sup>4</sup> the University Language Centre,<sup>5</sup> and the Economic Study Skills pages<sup>6</sup>
- guidelines and regulations on plagiarism; plagiarism is presenting the ideas, work or words of other people without proper, clear and unambiguous acknowledgement. It also includes self-plagiarism and the submission of material from essay banks.<sup>7</sup>
- standards for referencing.<sup>8</sup>

### **1) Writing your essay**

*Who is the target reader?*

This will vary by assignment and you should check the instructions. Typically, you will either be asked to write for someone who is either not familiar with Economics or someone who is familiar with Economics. Make sure you know who your essay is meant to be aimed at. If the person knows Economics then you can use works like Supply, Demand, Externalities, Elasticity, Surplus etc. without having to explained them. If the essay is aimed at someone who is not familiar with economic then you should not use these terms but instead you should use plain English.

*Should I write in the first or third person?*

Check the guidelines for your specific essay. The answer to this will depend on the assignment. If you are meant to be providing a balanced assessment of economic evidence then the third person is appropriate. In other circumstances either the first or third person might be appropriate.

*Can I include (photos of) hand drawn diagrams?*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/using-the-library/students/training-and-skills-support/my-learning-essentials/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.languagecentre.manchester.ac.uk/resources/online-resources/online-skills-development/academic-english/academic-writing/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://manuniecon.github.io/EconSkills/writing.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/using-the-library/students/training-and-skills-support/my-learning-essentials/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.languagecentre.manchester.ac.uk/resources/online-resources/online-skills-development/academic-english/academic-writing/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://manuniecon.github.io/EconSkills/writing.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=2870>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learning-objects/sls/packages/referencing/>;  
<https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-harvard>

Your essay must be typed, and all diagrams must be electronically produced (not photos of hand drawn diagrams).

*Should I use Section Headings?*

This is something you need to decide for yourself. When writing you need to link the components. In a long piece, subheadings are useful. In a short essay it is quite possible to create a high-quality coherent piece without them - just by linking the paragraphs/arguments with sentences. That said, headings and sub-headings can be useful in ensuring your essay is sensibly structured<sup>9</sup>.

## **2) Reading and resources**

Your lecturer will typically want you to draw on material that you covered in your course. Start by checking the Blackboard page for your course and any specific instructions that the lecturer gave. If your lecturer provides suggested readings for the essay, read those first.

Make sure that you do not plagiarize other people's work and that you reference appropriately. A full list of the references should appear in a separate section of the document; see the template file.

Make clear in your essay the distinction between:

- ideas and work of other people
- ideas or material that you have personally contributed.

To assist you, here are a few important **dos** and **don'ts**:

- Do not construct a piece of work by cutting and pasting or copying material written by other people
- Quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks to show that it is a direct quote, and it must have the source properly acknowledged at that point. Include page numbers
- Any URLs (website addresses) consulted must be included in the references and must be accurate and exact. If you have used information from many sites, list them all.
- References to journal articles must list year of publication, volume/issue number and page numbers.
- References to books must list *all* authors, year of publication and the exact title.
- If the book is an edited work with different authors contributing individual chapters, you must list the edited work and the specific chapter(s) used.
- Quotes should be accompanied by page numbers.
- Avoid websites like economicshelp.com as these are not always reliable.

## **3) Proofread your work.**

Proofreading is an essential part of the writing process, see the university guidelines.<sup>10</sup>

It is the final step you need to take to ensure that you are communicating your ideas clearly and to ensure that you are fulfilling the goals of your writing.

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<sup>9</sup> Examples can be found at: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learning-objects/mle/proofreading/story\\_html5.html](https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learning-objects/mle/proofreading/story_html5.html)

It is more than merely a spell check. It should involve double-checking your work against any criteria you have, making sure your references are accurate, your analysis sound, and clarifying any remaining questions or limitations of your work.

#### 4) What File Format should I use?

You should write your essay using standard word processing software; you can download Office 365 via: <https://www.itservices.manchester.ac.uk/students/office365>

You must format your document so that it is:

- **Double line spaced**
- **Font = Arial**
- **Font Size = 12pt**
- **2.5cm margins – left and right, top and bottom**

If a word count is specified it will usually be a maximum, i.e. a limit, not a target. You will typically be asked to state the word count at the end of the essay, see the template file for details. In some cases, you might be given a page limit instead.

The word count covers everything after the title and up to the Reference section at the end; it does not include the Reference section and it does not include figures or tables.

Marks will be deducted for deviations from this formatting.

Submit your file in \*.doc. \*.docx or \*.pdf format.

The essay should be anonymous. Your name should not appear anywhere in the document, only your student registration ID number.

#### *How should I refer to referenced material?*

A full list of the references should be included as a separate section. This section does not count towards the word count. Use what is called the Harvard referencing style<sup>11</sup>. Use **in-text citation** when directly quoting or paraphrasing a source. They are in the body of the work and contain a fragment of the full citation. For example:

"After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe..." (Fitzgerald, 2004, p.71).

**The reference list** at the end of the work should include the full citations for all sources used. This needs to be sufficient information to uniquely identify the source. For example:

Fitzgerald, F. (2004). *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner.

#### **Can I include figures and tables? What format should they be in?**

Check the instructions and guidelines for your specific assignment. Figures and tables will generally be allowed, and it is generally up to you to decide which and how many to include. There might also be instructions on where in the document tables and figures should appear, if there are then follow them. They should be numbered sequentially. Make sure you refer to any

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<sup>11</sup> For which there are many guides online, such as:

[https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1402/referencing/50/leeds\\_harvard\\_introduction](https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1402/referencing/50/leeds_harvard_introduction)

figures or tables that you do include in the text - don't include them if you don't want to talk about them. Make sure that the vertical and horizontal axes are clearly labelled and that you indicate the source of the figure or table or the underlying data.

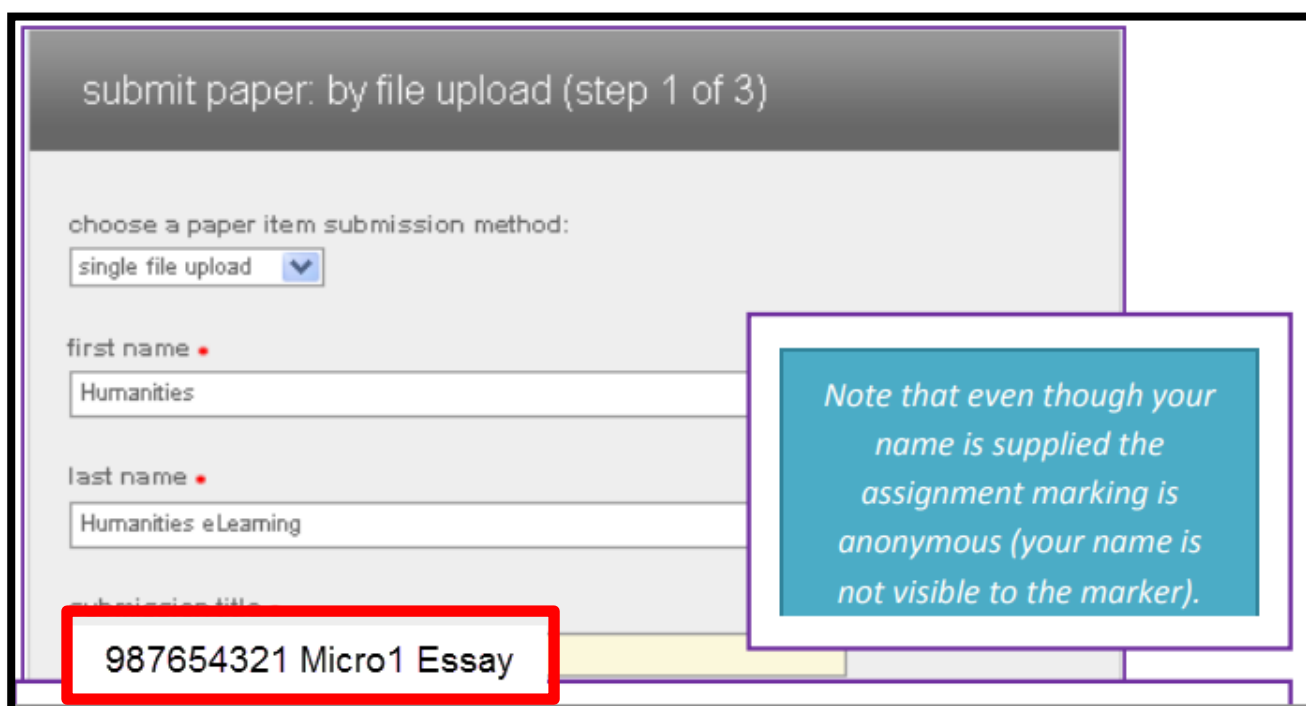
### How do I submit my essay?

Check the instructions for your specific essay, but essays will almost always be electronically submitted via Blackboard and scanned via *TurnItIn*.

Late submission incurs mark penalties

When submitting you will be asked to enter a **Submission Title** – this **must** be your Registration ID (library card) number and the title of your course”

For example:



submit paper: by file upload (step 1 of 3)

choose a paper item submission method:  
single file upload

first name  
Humanities

last name  
Humanities eLearning

submission title  
987654321 Micro1 Essay

Note that even though your name is supplied the assignment marking is anonymous (your name is not visible to the marker).

You will receive a digital receipt of submission by email Check for this. If it does not arrive check whether you have submitted your work – do this before the submission deadline. Do not leave submission until very close to the deadline – this risks a late submission and late penalties.

### How can I access my grades and feedback on my essay?

Instructions on submitting your work and viewing the mark and feedback on that work is available in the Blackboard space for your unit.

### Where can I get more help?

Check the Blackboard pages for your course, the Discussion Board if your unit has one, and the instructions provided with your essay or other work.