



The importance of good introductions and conclusions in assignments

Introductions

There's no second chance to make a first impression. The opening paragraph, the introduction to the essay, needs to address three or four main purposes: Use your essay introduction to:

- Show that you have grasped the key implications - through your interpretation of the question in your own words.
- Explain briefly why this topic is important.
- Describe what the essay covers - a brief overview of the structure.
- Indicate some key findings reached in the essay.

It is also possible that you may define some key terms from the assignment title (with citations). However, these are perhaps more likely to appear in the next one or two paragraphs after the introduction.

Conclusions

A conclusion should only **summarise the main themes of your preceding essay**. So this needs to briefly restate the main position reached in the argument that has been developed throughout the essay. Like the introduction this should usually only be one paragraph.

Perhaps the best way of illustrating how to focus your conclusion may therefore be to list what should **NOT** be included in a conclusion:

- **No** new points. Any ideas that are relevant to your essay need to be discussed in depth. This can only be achieved in the main body of the essay.
- **No** citations. All the essay key points that are summarised in the conclusion will have already been established with academic evidence in the essay body, so these sources do not need to be cited again.

Here is a good example of how one student followed the above principles:

Essay question:

Outline the Heckscher-Ohlin model of international trade and its relevance for understanding inequality between developed and developing countries.

Introduction:

The Heckscher-Ohlin (HO) model is a symbol of a change of economic thinking from classicism to neoclassicism, and is perhaps the most well-regarded theory of international trade. This essay will outline the HO model, and then discuss its utility in developing understanding of some trends in wage inequality, particularly in emerging economies. This discussion will, however, also highlight some limitations to the model in terms of more recent developments in modern international trade.

Here is the same student's conclusion in the International Trade essay. Notice how this returns 'full circle' and elaborates on points made in the introduction:

In conclusion then, this essay has acknowledged the contributions made by the HO model to the theoretical understanding of international trade. It has explained this from the view of a country's basic source advantages, and has also established a foundation to the form of modern trade theory. This has been particularly valuable in predicting reductions in wage inequality in newly-industrialised economies in East Asia. However, there are some drawbacks with this static model because of its assumptions that do not adapt to the most recent international trade developments, for example in countries which have changed their comparative advantage.



Contact:

Dr Martin Sedgley, Head of Effective Learning

Mrs Amy Allhouse, Academic Skills Advisor



Room 0.11 and 0.12,
Yvette Jacobson Building



01274 234952



mgt.els@bradford.ac.uk



www.bradford.ac.uk/management/els

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Read Effective Learning Service booklet 'Essay Writing 2: Planning and Structuring your essays' for more detailed explanation.