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Introduction

Economics Workshop is a course that helps you to develop your ability to critically evaluate and analyse economic issues. One of the main goals of this course is to foster your written communication and presentation skills. This document summarises the essay requirements and provides general hints on how to write academic essays and short reports.

Two essays (one for joint maths EC1133 students) will count towards 40% of your final mark for this course. There are three main aspects that the markers will be focusing on when assessing your essays:

1. **Content:** appropriateness and scope of the research question, the use of economic theory, and quality of argumentation;
2. **Layout:** formatting and organisation of your essay;
3. **Writing style:** grammar, spelling, sentence structure, clarity, appropriate use of terms and terminology.

This document contains information on layout, formatting, and submission of your work. It also provides some useful hints on how to get started with your essay, choose your topic, etc. However, there is no simple recipe for the latter task and the recommendations given below are meant to be suggestive only. Hence, if you have any doubts about appropriateness of your topic you should talk to your seminar leader or the course coordinator before proceeding to the write-up.

Getting started

We leave the choice of topic entirely up to you. However, the essays **must be on economics** and must be on two substantially different topics. Good advice on the choice of essay is to choose topics from/start with an issue raised in EC1103 lectures or seminars. This will give you somewhere to begin your research for the essay. Choose topics that interest you. You will work harder and more effectively on topics you enjoy.

*Start off by formulating your research question.*

Your essay must state an explicit research question that you are trying to address in your work. A topic of the sort “Economics of Development” is too broad. It is often easier to write a good and interesting essay if you cover a narrower topic rather than attempting a wide sweep. Try to be very clear and to the point in formulating your ideas and setting up a structure for the essay.

*Set up an outline of your discussion.*

If you find it difficult to express your thoughts precisely and concisely you might find it useful to set up (for yourself) a skeleton of the discussion. Make bullet points of all the arguments you intend to discuss, possibly with sub-bullets. Ask yourself if you have all items included and structured the arguments in a way that will enable the reader to
recognize/follow this structure when reading your final text. Consider whether you can clarify the structure by changing the order of bullets or re-grouping under sub-headings some (or even all) the original bullet points.

In drafting your essay it is useful to always have its structure in mind (see section on structuring an essay). Start off by writing an outline for your essay. At first, such a ‘working outline’ might be an informal list of concepts and ideas that you intend to cover in the essay. You will then more fully develop it as you do your research and successively include section headlines and some notes on what to include in each of them. Continuously revising this outline as you progress with your research and writing will lead to a final outline that should guarantee a clearly structured and coherent essay.

You will find that this process helps you organize your material and makes you discover connections between pieces of information that you were not aware of initially. Moreover, this will discipline you to maintain a logical flow of arguments and ideas as well as help to avoid redundancies by making you aware of material that you have already used. Also, an outline will assist you in balancing your essay, showing ‘too thin’ parts that require additional research/writing and ‘too thick’ parts which can benefit from weeding out material that is not really relevant to the purposes of your paper. Be sure to equilibrate your essay so that the space covered in a section is in line with the importance you want this section to have relative to others. Use the word number resource that you have wisely.

- **Build your argument on economic theories and previous research.**

In your essay, try to relate to economic theories that you have learnt about or ones that you find in books and articles and learn about for the purpose of writing your essay. In doing this, make an attempt to apply the theory to your particular problem, rather than just restate the theory as it is described in a text book/lecture notes/journal articles. For example, if you study the market for some good X and intend to discuss the effects of imposing a tax on the consumption of this good, then you may want to discuss how, according to economic theories, this will alter the price and the consumption of X, depending on the price elasticity. But you may be able to move a step further (to apply the theory to your particular problem) by providing reasons for why we should expect the price elasticity of X to be, say, very low and why, as a consequence of this, the tax will have only a small effect on the consumption of X.

Try to be analytical. Explain exactly why, say, you think the less developed countries are exploited, or why they would benefit from some particular policy. Make explicit the definitions and the criteria you use in your reasoning. Give an account of the evidence you rely on in reaching your conclusion. A piece of good academic writing is typically different from a good political speech! Avoid using colloquialism. Your goal is to be objective, constructive, and to use a neutral academic language (as opposed to catchy phrases we see in newspapers and magazines).

Do not quote too much other people’s work. Use your own words to describe concepts and only quote literally SHORT and REMARKABLE passages from other people’s work.
Often essays become very badly structured because they just paste one quote after the other. You will make your essay much better (and more original) by starting from this string of quotes and ideas, thinking about a logical thread linking them and then writing up in YOUR OWN words a line of arguments that makes sense to YOU (giving credit to others by citing the sources of the various ideas at the appropriate place).

- **Do your research.**

When doing your research, do not resort to obscure sources on the web. It is not a good idea to just Google concepts and then use a nice looking webpage. **It is also a very bad idea to turn in “Wikidemia”** (an essay that simply paraphrases a Wikipedia entry). Use journal articles, books, newspapers or working papers from academic institutions. Web pages should only be used as sources if they provide data or other information not available from the primary sources above and are from ‘renowned’ institutions (e.g., Bank of England, IMF).

When you read do so critically. Do not trust blindly whatever is published online - nobody checks that information on web pages is correct! Journal articles are refereed and books have passed an extensive editing process. Note also, that most working papers are in a ‘pre-publication’ stage, where no one but (hopefully) the authors have checked them. Always read a variety of different sources to confirm your ideas, see if you can think of an alternative explanation for the same issue, and try to weigh pros and cons of any economic theory and/or empirical work.

**Structure**

The first page should give the essay title, your name and student number as well as a word count. All pages of your essay should have a page number printed on it. You might want to include a list of contents before the main body of the essay. The essay should have the following structure:

- **Title page**

The title need not be identical to the question that you are studying. In fact, it is probably best if the two do not coincide. For example, “Discuss the reasons of underdevelopment. Can you suggest a way out of the problem?” is not a good title. It might be natural for a lecturer to use such a formulation when suggesting a topic for an essay. But this does not mean that you should use exactly that formulation as the title of your final essay. Instead of the title above one could, for example, use “Reasons for underdevelopment: A discussion” or “Ways out of the underdevelopment problem.”

- **Introduction**

An effective introduction will map out the course that you will be taking the reader on in your essay. Make sure that you motivate your essay question - why this is an interesting question and why do we care. Your introduction should also explain exactly what the
essay will be about and how it will be structured. The reader needs to know early on what he or she can expect to find in your essay, and where in the essay he or she can find some particular discussion.

- **Main section**

This part is the meat of your essay. State clearly assumptions that are underlying your analysis and include definitions as well as brief explanations of key concepts (you can assume that the reader knows the level of economics that you do). Present your arguments in a coherent and logical order. Sub-sections are often very useful for this purpose. In general, you should aim to bring related material together under a general heading. Organize your material in sections that relate logically to each other. Be sure to explain the intuition for results rather than enter into unnecessary details. Discuss how the results from the literature can be used and why they are important to answer the question that you are trying to analyze. Including tables with supporting data and figures with illustrations is usually extremely helpful (be sure to number tables and figures for easier reference). If you provide mathematical formulas, always make clear what variables in them mean (e.g., \( \bar{r}_i \): random return on asset \( i \)). Moreover, it usually is helpful to restate verbally what an equation means. Be consistent in your notation (and do not just copy formulas from various sources without thinking about how they relate). Always make clear where relevant information can be found in your essay (e.g., pointing out that the summary statistics are given in table 4; referring to equation (4); etc.).

- **Conclusion**

This section should summarize the main points of your essay and wrap up the sequence of ideas that you presented in a neat package. You might want to give an outlook on what open questions remain or briefly point out caveats. For example, include in your discussion what assumptions the theories you presented required and how results would be likely to change if one modified them, what implications for the broader topic the presented theories have, how they can guide real-life decisions, etc.

- **Bibliography**

This is a list of the references you cited in the essay. These should be alphabetically ordered (by last name of the first author). See hints for doing citations/references below.

FAILURE TO CITE APPROPRIATELY EXPOSES YOU TO THE RISK OF BEING ACCUSED OF PLAGIARISM!!!

**Citations and references**

Do the citing as in a professional journal article (to see what this looks like, for example, check any issue of the *American Economic Review*). The principle that you should keep in mind is that the information that you provide the reader with must be sufficient for him or her to find the original argument and verify that it is correctly restated by you. In
particular, this means that you must give a page number whenever you quote literally or refer to specific ideas presented in some part of a book/article rather than to broad ideas and themes in a book/article.

**Example 1:** You are describing in your own words ideas presented in a journal article that you read:

In-text citation:

Glosten and Milgrom (1985) provide a model of a dealer market and analyze the consequences of asymmetric information about the stock’s underlying value for the functioning of such a market.

Reference in bibliography:


**Example 2:** You are quoting the author’s words:

In-text citation:

"Whaling norms were not tidy, certainly less tidy than Melville asserted in Moby Dick" (Ellickson 1989, p.34)

Reference in bibliography:


**Example 3:** You are using data from a website:

In-text citation:

Expenditure per student in Azerbaijan was 7.3 percent of GDP in 2002 (World Bank 2005).

Alternative: Expenditure per student in Azerbaijan was 7.3 percent of GDP in 2002.1


Reference in bibliography:


If you have multiple references from one source for one year, use Author (2005a), Author (2005b), etc.
Plagiarism

Your submitted work must be original in the sense

- that you are the sole author (see also plagiarism below);

- that it was not already submitted as part of the same or another course at Royal Holloway or another institution (e.g. you cannot reuse an essay from your school days);

- that it is substantially different from any other piece of work which has been published or placed in a publicly accessible media for other purposes (e.g. you cannot reuse an essay that you wrote during an internship which is posted on the web page of some institution or printed in one of their publications; also you cannot submit an essay which is to a significant extent composed of verbatim quotations, even if they are correctly referenced).

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence which can lead to failure of the course or even the loss of your degree. Examples of plagiarism are not appropriately referencing sources and failure to appropriately acknowledge the work of others in your essays. To help you familiarise yourself with rules regarding plagiarism, referencing, and originality of your work it is a requirement for submitting the essays to work through this document and to complete an online tutorial on plagiarism offered as part of EC1101. Further information on this is, or will be shortly, available via a link at the Moodle page for this course. The Student Handbook provides additional information on plagiarism and lists a number of sources on academic writing. In addition, academic writing courses are available from the Language Centre. The College rules and processes regarding plagiarism can be found in the College's Regulations Governing Examination and Assessment, available online at:


A good description of what plagiarism means is reprinted here from a guide to writing research papers on http://webster.commmnet.edu/mla/:

Using someone else’s ideas or phrasing and representing those ideas or phrasing as our own, either on purpose or through carelessness, is a serious offence known as plagiarism. “Ideas or phrasing” includes written or spoken material, of course - from whole papers and paragraphs to sentences, and, indeed, phrases - but it also includes statistics, lab results, art work, etc. “Someone else” can mean a professional source, such as a published writer or critic in a book, magazine, encyclopaedia, or journal; an electronic resource such as material we discover on the World Wide Web; another student at our school or anywhere else; a paper-writing “service” (online or otherwise) which offers to sell written papers for a fee.
Let us suppose, for example, that we’re doing a paper for Music Appreciation on the child prodigy years of the composer and pianist Franz Liszt and that we’ve read about the development of the young artist in several sources. In Alan Walker’s book Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years (Ithaca: 1983), we read that Liszt’s father encouraged him, at age six, to play the piano from memory, to sight-read music, and, above all, to improvise. We can report in our paper (and in our own words) that Liszt was probably the most gifted of the child prodigies making their mark in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century - because that is the kind of information we could have gotten from a number of sources; it has become what we call common knowledge.

However, if we report on the boy’s father’s role in the prodigy’s development, we should give proper credit to Alan Walker. We could write, for instance, the following: Franz Liszt’s father encouraged him, as early as age six, to practice skills which later served him as an internationally recognized prodigy (Walker 59). Or, we could write something like this: Alan Walker notes that, under the tutelage of his father, Franz Liszt began work in earnest on his piano playing at the age of six (59). Not to give Walker credit for this important information is plagiarism.

The website http://webster.commnet.edu/mla/ also lists a few useful examples:

The original text from Elaine Tyler May’s “Myths and Realities of the American Family” reads as follows:

Because women’s wages often continue to reflect the fiction that men earn the family wage, single mothers rarely earn enough to support themselves and their children adequately. And because work is still organized around the assumption that mothers stay home with children, even though few mothers can afford to do so, child-care facilities in the United States remain woefully inadequate.

Here are some possible uses of this text. As you read through each version, try to decide if it is a legitimate use of May’s text or a plagiarism.

**Version A:**

Since women’s wages often continue to reflect the mistaken notion that men are the main wage earners in the family, single mothers rarely make enough to support themselves and their children very well. Also, because work is still based on the assumption that mothers stay home with children, facilities for child care remain woefully inadequate in the United States.

Plagiarism: In Version A there is too much direct borrowing of sentence structure and wording. The writer changes some words, drops one phrase, and adds some new language, but the overall text closely resembles May’s. Even with a citation, the writer is still plagiarizing because the lack of quotation marks indicates that Version A is a paraphrase, and should thus be in the writer’s own language.

**Version B:**
As Elaine Tyler May points out, “women's wages often continue to reflect the fiction that men earn the family wage” (588). Thus many single mothers cannot support themselves and their children adequately. Furthermore, since work is based on the assumption that mothers stay home with children, facilities for day care in this country are still “woefully inadequate.” (May 589).

Plagiarism: The writer now cites May, so we’re closer to telling the truth about the relationship of our text to the source, but this text continues to borrow too much language.

**Version C:**

By and large, our economy still operates on the mistaken notion that men are the main breadwinners in the family. Thus, women continue to earn lower wages than men. This means, in effect, that many single mothers cannot earn a decent living. Furthermore, adequate day care is not available in the United States because of the mistaken assumption that mothers remain at home with their children.

Plagiarism: Version C shows good paraphrasing of wording and sentence structure, but May’s original ideas are not acknowledged. Some of May’s points are common knowledge (women earn less than men, many single mothers live in poverty), but May uses this common knowledge to make a specific and original point and her original conception of this idea is not acknowledged.

**Version D:**

Women today still earn less than men - so much less that many single mothers and their children live near or below the poverty line. Elaine Tyler May argues that this situation stems in part from “the fiction that men earn the family wage” (588). May further suggests that the American workplace still operates on the assumption that mothers with children stay home to care for them (589). This assumption, in my opinion, does not have the force it once did. More and more businesses offer in-house day-care facilities.

No Plagiarism: The writer makes use of the common knowledge in May’s work, but acknowledges May’s original conclusion and does not try to pass it off as his or her own. The quotation is properly cited, as is a later paraphrase of another of May’s ideas.

**Format**

Each essay should be between 1,500-2,000 words long (all words above 2,000 will not be read). The two essays must be on a substantially different topic – if in doubt talk to your seminar leader or contact the course leader.

Your essay MUST:

a) Be word processed. If you cannot word process go the Computer Centre and sign up for a course!
b) Be typed with 1.5-line spacing and margins of at least 1 inch on either side, and have page numbers;

c) Use Arial or Times New Roman font in size 12.

d) The first page must give the essay title, your name, your student number, and a word count.

e) Contain adequate and proper references and bibliography (see referencing above).

**Submitting your essays**

Before you hand in your essay to the Department Office you must first submit it to Turnitin via the internet. Turnitin is a plagiarism detection service. Instructions on how to submit your essay to Turnitin are now, or will be shortly, available via a link at the Moodle page for this course.

When you submit your essay to Turnitin you will receive a digital receipt via email. You should print out the first page only of this digital receipt. This must be handed in to the Departmental Office as proof of your submission to Turnitin.

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**Checklist:**

1. **Beginning of term**
   
   Familiarise yourself with the essay requirement as well as with plagiarism and how it can be avoided:

   (i) work through the guidelines in the document *Guidelines for writing your essays*;

   (ii) complete the online tutorial on plagiarism offered as part of EC1101.

2. **Submission of your essays**

   Essays must be handed in by 12 noon on the date laid out in the current Student Handbook. Aim to be finished at least 2 hours before the noon deadline.

   (i) Submit your essay to Turnitin and print out the first page of the digital receipt (use the printer setup page for this).

   (ii) Hand in your essay to the Department Office (H209) by 12 noon, submitting the following pieces:

   1. A formatted and stapled paper copy of the essay;

   2. The first page of the Turnitin digital receipt.

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You should read the relevant section of Department Handbook for the rules about handing in essays. Note that all the required items must be handed in by 12 noon on the
day indicated to the Department Office. You should not under any circumstances give an essay directly to the lecturer – you will not get credit for submission. **No late essays are accepted unless the Undergraduate Director has approved the late submission on the basis of compelling medical or other written evidence.**

Finally, note that computer failure or a printer failure at the Computer Centre is not an acceptable reason for late submission of an essay. Therefore, **make backup copies of your essay at all stages while you are working on them and do not leave printing out to the last minute. It is advisable to save and print out a preliminary version well before the deadline, which you can then hand in an emergency. Start the electronic submission well before the noon deadline, as from 12 noon on submissions will no longer be accepted.** Also, be sure to familiarise yourself with the rules regarding plagiarism, referencing, and originality of your work and check that the essay submitted complies with these standards (see section *Plagiarism* above). Plagiarism will be detected both by the markers and through a scanning software and lead to a punishment which may mean failure of the course or even loss of the entire degree.

**Further information**

You might find these references useful:

- **William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, 1959 (and other years), The Elements of Style.** Various publishers. (roughly £5)

  This slim guide distils essential writing skills. Library: 808.02 STR

- **Kate L. Turabian, 1996 (and other years), A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations.** Chicago: University of Chicago. (roughly £10).

  Particularly good on presentation. Library: 808.02 TUR 11