

Somerville Law Induction Course 2017: Session 3

Study Skills and Essay Writing

Part A

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We will run this session as a seminar-type discussion. The idea is for us, your tutors, to give some tips on study skills and essay writing, but also for you, our students, to give your views and share tips on what has worked for you in the past. To prepare for the session, you should think about each of the suggested **Study Skills Discussion Topics** below, and note down any questions you have and ideas of things that you have found useful in your studies so far. You should also look at the advice on study skills on the University's website, here:

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills#>

-in particular, the sections on Time Management, Research and Library Skills, Plagiarism, and referencing. Look also at this document which covers good academic practice in the above areas:

http://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/field/field_document/Academic%20good%20practice%20a%20practical%20guide.pdf

It would also be helpful if you read the University's advice on what plagiarism is and how to avoid inadvertently engaging in it:

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>

In addition, you should read and consider the **2 sample marked essays** which have been placed on the website at the same location as the other materials for the induction course, in conjunction with the background material, and the Law Faculty's marking criteria. Think about the extent to which the authors of these essays have or have not done as well as they could on the various criteria. We will use this material as the basis for our discussion in the **Essay Writing** section of the session.

(A) Study Skills Discussion Topics

- (1) What is distinctive about University teaching and learning?
- (2) Time Management and Organisation in the Oxford System
- (3) Managing Reading Lists and Reading Effectively
- (4) Effective Note-taking, and Organising Your Notes and Other Materials
- (5) Preparing for the tutorial #1: get the most out of tutorial discussion

(6) Preparing for the tutorial #2: planning and writing the essay

(7) Regular Review of Your Work and Your Progress

(B) Essay writing

Please read over the two sample essays and the background information on the topic being discussed in the essays. The tutor's comments are in BOLD CAPS and square brackets in the main text. The marking criteria applied in Law Moderations at Oxford University are as follows, and you should consider these as you read the essays. Please also read the handout you have been sent entitled "**How to Succeed in Writing Essays?: a few suggestions and guidelines**".

Marking criteria for Law Moderations:

Distinction (70% and above):

Distinction answers represent a level of attainment which, for a first year undergraduate, can be regarded as unusually good. They show several of the following qualities:

- close attention to the question asked;
- extensive knowledge and understanding of the topic addressed;
- impressive comprehensiveness and accuracy, with few substantial errors or omissions;
- notable clarity and appropriateness of structure, argument, integration of information and ideas, and expression;
- identification of more than one possible line of argument;
- good appreciation of theoretical arguments concerning the topic and substantial critical analysis.

Pass (40-69%):

Pass answers represent a level of attainment which, for an undergraduate, can be regarded as in the range between good and only just acceptable. To an extent varying with their place within this range, they show the following qualities:

(60-69%)

- Attention to the question asked;
- clear and detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic addressed;
- good comprehensiveness and accuracy, with few substantial errors or omissions;
- a clear and appropriate structure, argument, integration of information and ideas, and expression, with theoretical or critical treatment of the topic

(50-59%)

- Normally, attention to the question asked
- a fair knowledge and understanding of the topic addressed
- reasonable comprehensiveness and accuracy, but marked by some substantial errors and omissions
- a reasonably clear and appropriate structure, though theoretical or critical treatment is scanty or weak

(40-49%)

- Ability to identify the relevant subject area of question, if not necessarily close attention to the question asked
- some knowledge and understanding of topic addressed, but with weakness in comprehensiveness and accuracy, and commonly including substantial errors and omissions
- some structure though often unclear or inappropriate and marked by negligible theoretical or critical treatment

Fail (less than 40%): Some or all of the qualities required for a pass answer are absent.