**HOW TO WRITE A SENIOR ESSAY**

A crucial part of a senior essay is formal statements that fulfill the requirements for graduation at first degree level. It is one of the key criteria to differentiate BA graduates from MA and PhD graduates. This paper provides guidance on how to write a senior essay.

1. To begin with, you need to make sure the area you wish to study is covered by a member(s) of academic staff during your stay at the university (It could be writing, speaking, listening and grammar skills).
2. Be clear with an outline of writing a senior essay and design to:

* formulate and define a clear, interesting research question
* establish the relevance and value of the topic of research and its questions in the context of current academic thinking, highlighting its originality and significance
* outline a clear and practical methodology which enables you to answer the research questions or objectives, and to describe and evaluate any data or source material you will draw upon
* suggest what you hope to discover at the end of your research and what new areas it might open up at BA degree level
* provide a provisional timeline of your research (when to begin, process and end the research)

1. **What is the senior essay research for? Your senior essay could be to**

* assess your expertise in the area in which you want to conduct research, your knowledge of the existing literature and how your proposed senior essay will enhance it
* to encourage you to identify a potential an academic advisor and get in touch with him or her to discuss your topic of research before making an formal application, to ensure it is of mutual interest and to gain input on the design, scope and feasibility of your study.

1. **Structuring a senior essay research:** A senior essay structure could include:

* **Title page** – a working title of your senior essay research; this may not be the finalized title of your research project, but must show that you have thought through what you are hoping to achieve
* **Introduction:** this can include the background, the problem, the objectives, significances and delimitations.
* **Literature Review** – you should develop your senior essay to demonstrate that you are aware of the important issues, themes and debates in the relevant literature, identifying existing gaps (both theoretical and practical aspects of ELT). You must refer to key articles and texts and briefly show that you understand how they are relevant to your research area.
* **Key Research Questions or Objective** – in this section you need to outline the questions and objectives of the research. What are the key questions your research will be focusing on and seeking to answer?
* **Methodology** – you need to explain what methods of investigation you are planning to utilize within the research (whether quantitative or qualitative or both), providing some justification for why they are most appropriate, and the limits and potential you envisage
* **Timeline/Research Planning** – an outline of the timescale of the research, indicating how long different tasks are envisaged to take, and the sequence of the project in the time available
* **References** – you need to include a list of references to key articles and texts that are both cited within the research proposal and provided as a bibliography at the end of the proposal.

1. **Some Things to Bear in Mind**

* **Don’t choose something too broad:** your research must be achievable. Your project might feel like it is going to last a long time. You won’t be able to answer every question about the topic, or look into every single aspect of a subject.
* **Don’t choose something vague:** your proposal needs to be as defined as possible, as a proposal which is too vague will look like you haven’t thought it through.
* **Make sure you find it interesting:** be sure to choose something you are interested in and passionate about. You’ll spend an awful lot of time studying it, so you must be committed to the topic.

Assignments

1. Be in small groups of four or five. Then **select a research area** (speaking, writing, listening, grammar, vocabulary or reading skills). Describe the reasons why you are going to conduct your study on this area (three dotted reasons would be more acceptable).
2. **Write down the reasons** or issues in brief discussing why you have been interested in to study the problem as a requirement for your bachelor of arts in English language and literature.
3. Formulate a **short proposal** of your research area.
4. **Read more on how to sequence and write a senior essay.** (Some materials have been attached to you for this purpose)