

Essay Writing Guidance

By

Maj John Doe

Graduate Writing Skills (GSS-501S)

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ABSTRACT (or EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)

This paper presents formatting guidance for essays written for and submitted to the eSchool of Graduate PME for grading or for carryover use in facilitated courses. Do not apply this guidance for research papers or assignments that are reflective in nature. See the course assignment instructions for specific guidance

If an abstract or executive summary is required in the assignment instructions, place it here after the cover page but before the first page of the assignment. If the instructions do not specify an abstract or executive summary, delete this page.

Unless otherwise specified in the assignment instructions, words in the abstract or executive summary are not included in the assignment word or page count.

Wherever assignment instructions conflict with the instructions in this guide, the assignment instructions take precedence.

## INTRODUCTION

Writing an essay at the graduate level requires attention to detail in three key areas:

1. Structure
2. Format
3. References

This paper addresses each of these areas in turn, and provides a template for you to follow when completing eSchool of Graduate PME graded assignments.

## ESSAY STRUCTURE

The introduction briefly overviews the paper and is normally no more than 10% of the assignment's allowable word count. In general, the introduction should address the following elements:

- The research question or problem, and a clear statement of purpose.
- The thesis statement, or main point of the essay.
- An overview of the major themes/topics included in the essay.

The body of the essay follows the introduction. It should provide a well-organized and well-developed analysis of the topic described. This requires thoughtful consideration of what major themes to include, and is made more critical given the limited length of an assignment. As a guide, three or four main points are sufficient and should afford the space to conduct an appropriate level of analysis. This analysis is accomplished through logical argument and evidence from supporting sources. Importantly, this is not a lengthy background or restatement of the positions of others. The analysis, and all that entails, is yours and will be graded in

accordance with the rubric provided in the course for the assignment. Background and the positions of others can be valuable in support, but they must ultimately support the framework of analysis, not replace it. An over reliance on support material that detracts from your analysis may have a negative impact on your grade.

After the body of the essay, you must provide a conclusion which includes a brief review of key points followed by a summary. It may also include formal conclusions, recommendations, or implications that result from your analysis, but it should not present new information or arguments. Like the introduction, the conclusion is normally no more than 10% of the assignment's allowable word count.

### ESSAY FORMAT

The body of the paper may be organized in any manner required to answer the essay question. You may use headings to separate sections of your essay, but they are not required unless specified by the assignment instructions.

In general, use the following formatting guidance:

- 1" margins all around
- Times New Roman, 12 point font
- Cover page (unless specifically excepted in assignment instructions)
- Abstract or executive summary (if specified)
- Header containing your last name and course number (this should also be the name of the document uploaded, unless otherwise specified in the assignment instructions)
- Footer containing a page number

- Endnotes in Times New Roman, 10 point font, on the last page (see below)

This Microsoft Word template is configured to meet these requirements.

## ESSAY REFERENCES

Throughout the paper, appropriate references must be used to accurately give credit where credit is due. The ideas, concepts and facts presented by others can provide valuable support, but their use must be appropriately attributed. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, a serious breach of both academic and professional standards that can bring “severe professional repercussions.”<sup>1</sup>

Substantiated cases of plagiarism will result in course failure, suspension from the course, and notification of your commander. Ensure you are familiar with the section on Academic Integrity in the Student Handbook. If you have questions on citing works, plagiarism, or Academic Integrity, ask your instructor or contact the Help Desk via the Support Center prior to submitting the assignment.

There are fundamentally two ways to use the work of others: verbatim quote or paraphrase. When using the verbatim (exact) words of another, you must identify the copied text using quotation marks and provide a citation. When paraphrasing (or summarizing) the ideas of others, you must identify the beginning and ending of the adapted text and provide a citation. For all eSchool work, these citations must be in endnote form and included at the end of the essay.

Endnote citations allow authors to put references, comments, and explanations at the end of the essay instead of at the bottom of individual pages. This is important because some eSchool assignments have a prescribed *word count*, while others have a required *page count*. Endnotes

do not count towards word or page counts. By placing all citations at the end of the essay, page length can easily be determined.

Endnote citations are required for all eSchool of Graduate PME graded assignments, as well as non-graded self-paced assignments that will be carried forward into a facilitated course. They are not required for ungraded, reflective essays used for enrichment. Details on endnote formatting and style may be found in Appendix A of the *AU Style Guide*.

Microsoft Word can help you correctly format your endnotes. To configure Microsoft Word, complete the following steps.

1. Click on the “References” tab in the menu bar.
2. In the “Citations and Bibliography” section, select “Style: Chicago”. (The Air University style is based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*.)
3. In the “Footnotes” section, select the small arrow at the bottom of the section to open the “More options for formatting footnotes and endnotes” dialogue.
4. In the “Footnotes & Endnotes” dialogue, select:
  - a. “Endnotes: End of Section”
  - b. “Number Format: 1, 2., 3...”
  - c. “Start at: 1”
  - d. “Numbering: Continuous”

These instructions will place all notes at the last page of your essay. Unless otherwise specified in the assignment instructions, endnotes also serve as your reference list. You do not need to include a separate Works Cited or Bibliography page unless directed. If a Works Cited or Bibliography page is required, it is IN ADDITION to the endnotes at the end of the essay, and

it is in a different format. Details on how to format a Bibliography may be found in Appendix B of the *AU Style Guide*.

## CONCLUSION

Writing an eSchool graded essay is not difficult if you follow the guidance prescribed in this template. A well-constructed essay will consist of a concise introduction, robust analysis, and specific conclusion supported by effective *endnote* citations. This template is pre-configured to meet all of the formatting requirements specified in most eSchool courses. If you have a question on any of these requirements, contact your instructor or submit a help ticket in the Support Center.

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<sup>1</sup> Air University, AU-1, *Air University Style and Author Guide* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, April 2015), 142. Online, available at: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/style/styleguide.pdf>.