PART 1: ESSAY CONTENT

1.1. Why essays? Objectives of the assessment

When we mark an essay, we are assessing your ability to critically evaluate the evidence and/or arguments presented in academic articles or books. More specifically, we are assessing your ability to:

- **Understand a question** by identifying the key lines of evidence and/or argument(s) relevant to the topic;
- **Carry out individual research** (as opposed to group/class work): i.e. your ability to work independently, and to research the key topics, arguments, or types of evidence that are relevant to the set question;
- **Collect and synthesise factual knowledge** of the subject;
- **Understand evidence**: i.e. evaluate different ranges of sources and types of evidence; simplify complex ideas/hypotheses/theories;
- **Think critically**: take distance with sources; confront sources and evidence; make an objective argument as opposed to taking only one side on the topic;
- **Argue...**: make differentiated arguments, and create a sustained, coherent and well-argued case;
- **...using evidence**: use relevant and specific evidence appropriately to support your arguments;
- **Write**: i.e. your ability to communicate arguments in clear, well-organised prose, avoiding jargon and repetition;
- **Be structured and organised**: define a clear structure with a coherent introduction and a relevant conclusion which reflects on the main elements considered; stick to the required word limit.

Your approach to essay writing should take these objectives into account.

1.2. The essay question

Make sure that you understand the question that has been asked, and that you answer that question (not the one you wish had been asked!). You will not receive credit for writing down everything you know about a given topic; you should only include in the essay things that are relevant to the essay in hand, and which contribute to the argument you are trying to develop. Essay questions may consist of two or more parts; make sure that you answer all parts completely.

Never lose sight of the essay question; check that all your paragraphs relate to the question and that you have made it clear to the reader (either explicitly or by means of the logical structure) how they relate.
1.3. Essay structure

To ensure that you have a well-ordered and well-argued case to make, you should always prepare an outline before you begin writing. A bullet-point outline will enable you to organise your thoughts and key points and help to avoid repetition.

Always take care over the way you organise your answer. One good structure is: introduction, argument and conclusion. The introduction and conclusion are there to help the reader understand the aim and main points of the essay. Keep your reader in mind at all times; writing is communication, not just an assessment exercise.

1.4. Introduction

In the introduction, state briefly how you understand the question, and indicate briefly how you are going to approach it. Avoid giving a one-sentence, summary answer to the question in the introduction (leave this for the conclusion). Remember that you are introducing only your essay, not the subject as a whole, and so do not begin with a string of irrelevant general statements.

1.5. Argument

The core part of the essay should connect with the introduction (which says what the question is) and the conclusion (which says what the answer is) by way of a logically-constructed and fully-documented argument.

Each paragraph should form a logical unit in itself, and the argument should be connected by transitions between paragraphs. Remember that you cannot assume that your reader will follow your own sequence of thought if you have not made all the logical steps explicit. You should signpost all the logical connections so that it is clear to the reader where you are in the argument, how you reached that point, and where the argument is going next.

Always argue any point you make; never simply assert it. **Support each statement with appropriate and sufficient evidence.** Your argument should not consist of generalisations, but should contain **specific examples** to back up the case you are making. You need to convince the reader that your argument is sound.

If there are uncertainties in your argument or other possible interpretations, you should mention them. If appropriate, give the reason(s) why (i.e. evidence) another argument should be rejected. Note any major issues about method or theory. **Good discussion/analysis/evaluation of evidence is crucial to achieving a good mark.**

1.6. Conclusion

Your conclusion should summarise your argument and state your conclusion clearly. Don’t introduce any new information at this stage. You could say if (and what type of) future research might help resolve remaining or unsolved problems. It is often easier to write the introduction and conclusion last.

1.7. Appropriate sources for essays

Essays must be based on information collected from **academic publications**, i.e. articles from academic journals (e.g. *Antiquity, Cambridge Archaeological Journal, Journal of Archaeological Science*, etc.), chapters in edited volumes, and academic books. Archaeology is a fast-changing field, and students are encouraged to prioritise recent publications (from within the last two decades) in order to avoid outdated theories or debates.
Websites can do more harm than good because most have not been edited by scholars and may well be unreliable. Some, such as JSTOR (http://www.jstor.org/subject/archaeology), consist of archives of academic journals all of which have been edited to a high standard of scholarship, and which originated in print form. Websites should not be a substitute for books or articles. You can use websites (e.g. Wikipedia) for background, but don’t base your essay on them. The point of writing an essay is to do your own research (collecting and synthesising knowledge critically), which requires engaging with academic sources. If you use websites, make sure they are reliable. For example, use national, governmental (e.g. National Trust, Historic Environment Scotland, English Heritage, museums) or University sites. Do not forget to cite your sources in your essay, especially to support arguments.

1.8. Using quotations

Be careful not to use too many quotations from academic sources. Quotations must be limited to specific purposes. You only need to quote a passage from a book or article if the point is controversial, or you are going to challenge or qualify it in some way, or it is a point which neatly encapsulates the point of view of the scholar whose interpretation you are discussing in some detail. You should not quote a passage simply because it expresses a point better than you could.

When using quotations in an essay, bear in mind that quotations do not ‘speak for themselves’. It is usually necessary to follow a direct quotation with comments explaining its significance, how it serves as evidence for the particular point you are making, and sometimes drawing out relevant implications. The use of a longer quotation is normally justifiable only if you have a great deal to say about it and its contribution to your argument.

1.9. Using images

It is recommended that you use images in your essay. Most essays do not contain enough images. Images should not merely ‘embellish’ essays, they are bringing information visually and, if well used, provide additional support to your arguments, complementing your text. Using images is also a good way to save words (“A picture is worth a thousand words”). Make sure you cite the image in your essay (e.g. “As can be seen in Figure 3, the distribution of Roman forts in Scotland was limited”). Always add a descriptive caption under your image, acknowledging its source (e.g. “Figure 3: map of distribution of Roman sites in Scotland (source: HES/Canmore”).

There are different types of images you can use (maps, plans, graphs, photographs, artefact illustrations, artist’s impressions, etc.). You can find images in academic publications, or in other sources (e.g. Internet). Make sure that you always acknowledge the source of the image in the caption.

1.10. Writing, revising, re-writing

Writing is a recursive process: do not leave the writing until the end. Allow yourself enough time for revising, reshaping, and re-writing your text. This is essential for achieving a satisfactory result.
PART 2: ESSAY PRESENTATION

Good essay organisation, spelling and grammar make an impact on your marker. Make sure that you organise your thoughts and edit your paper as well as possible.

2.1. Format

- Use a 12-point font (a basic font like Times New Roman or Arial), and do not right-justify lines.
- Keep spacing at 1.5 or even double (2.0) but not single (1.0).
- Indent the start of each paragraph or leave a blank line between paragraphs.
- The pages must be numbered.

2.2. Word limit

You must keep to the word limit that has been set for the essay. There is no ‘percentage rule’ by which it is permitted to overshoot the word limit by \( x \) per cent. Note that the bibliography and figure captions do not count towards the word limit.

Use the word count wisely. Use concise statements, and avoid ‘fluff’ or ‘padding’. Keep it relevant to the topic, and focus on sustaining arguments rather than elaborating generalities. Don’t include extraneous information that you have uncovered simply to fill space or to show that you have done research.

The word count must be stated at the beginning or the end of the essay.

2.3. Bibliography

There must be a bibliography at the end of the essay. The bibliography should list all works directly quoted or referred to in the essay, either in the text or figures. The bibliography should not include references that are not cited in the essay (even if you have used them during the research phase – if you want to included them, cite them). Do not cite your course lectures or lecture notes as formal sources in the main bibliography – they should be used for guidance to identify appropriate reading only.

The bibliography should only contain academic publications. Websites should be listed in a separate section, following the bibliography.

2.4. Reference citations and bibliography format

Whenever you make a point based on information or opinion you have taken from another author, you should give the reference. You must cite ideas as well as quotations. Failure to cite your information properly will result in a low mark. It can sometimes lead to charges of plagiarism, resulting in a 0 mark, or other serious consequences (see part 3 below).

In Archaeology, references are cited in the text and not as footnotes (unlike History and Classics essays). All references given in the main text of an essay supply the same basic information: the surname of the author, the date of that author’s publication, and the specific page(s) which you used. Model your references on the following examples:

(Darvill, 2010, 43)
(Driscoll, 2009, 259–61)
(McMahon, 2016, 174)
(Arnoldussen and de Vries, 2014, 99-102)
(Bradley et al. 2016, 3-134)
The full details of these publications are then placed in the bibliography at the end of the essay, as in the examples below.

Items in the bibliography should be listed in alphabetical order by author’s surname, and must include the following elements:

Books:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author’s name</th>
<th>Book title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darvill, T.</td>
<td>Prehistoric Britain</td>
<td>London: Routledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors’ names</th>
<th>Date of publication</th>
<th>Place of publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Chapters in edited volumes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author of chapter</th>
<th>Title of chapter</th>
<th>Editors of the book</th>
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</thead>
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<th>Extent of chapter</th>
<th>Place of publication and publisher</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book title</td>
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</table>

Journal articles:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Author of article</th>
<th>Title of article</th>
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</thead>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of article</th>
<th>Journal title and volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors of article</th>
<th>Title of article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Do not forget to include the page numbers of journal articles. You don’t need to add the DOI of journal articles, or the link to the internet archive you accessed it from (e.g. JSTOR).

Websites should be listed separately, after the bibliography, and presented as follows, with the date accessed:


Once you have completed your bibliography, make sure that it is comprehensive (includes all reference details indicated above), and consistent in style throughout (with no discrepancies in the punctuation, lettering, ordering of details, etc. between references).

2.5. Writing style

Use formal language:

• Avoid contractions: ‘cannot’ for ‘can’t’, ‘is not’ for ‘isn’t’, and so on.
• Note difference in meaning between ‘its’ and ‘it’s’ (it is).
• Avoid slang, colloquialisms and clichés. For instance, ‘incredible’ is colloquial, use ‘extraordinary’ or similar more formal terms. The expression ‘a lot of’ is also colloquial: in essays, write ‘a large number of’ or (better) ‘many’.
• Avoid gender-specific terms – e.g. ‘man’ – where there are better or more neutral alternatives (humans, people and so on).
• Reading papers on archaeological topics in journals can help you identify the appropriate academic writing style.

Edit your paper:

• Use the grammar-check function of your word processor.
• Look over your paper for spelling mistakes and poorly constructed sentences. Read it out loud to yourself or a friend if that helps.
• Allow enough time before submission to carefully proof-read your essay. Write your paper in advance of the due date, then put it to one side for a day or two and then read it over again. (You’ll be surprised how many flaws will become apparent.) Give it a final polish before submission.

2.6. Presentation of images

• Image format: the larger the better, especially for detailed images such as maps or diagrams. Avoid reducing the image to include a text column next to it: use the full width of the page.
• Image quality is important. If you use images, good quality is expected. You can copy images directly from digital publications; or you can scan images from hard-copy books (scanners are available in the Central Library). Do not take photographs of figures in books as this creates distortions and decreases the image resolution.
• Ensure that, if you edit an electronic image, you ‘constrain proportions’ before doing so, or you will ‘stretch’ and distort the image.
• All images must be numbered and keyed to your text, e.g. ‘(Fig. 3)’.
• Do not forget to acknowledge the source of the image in the figure caption. The source of the image should be cited as in the main body of the essay (e.g. “Source: Darvill 2010”).
• Do not forget to include source references in the bibliography at the end of your essay.
3.1. Every essay must be written in your own words, with any quotations clearly indicated

Writing an essay is a way of conveying your thoughts about a particular issue to your reader. Your views will have been informed by those of other scholars, but you should aim to paraphrase your sources rather than repeat them word-for-word. This shows your readers that you have understood and processed everything that you have read.

From time to time, it may be appropriate to quote the exact wording of your sources. You should only do this if:

a) you want to highlight a specific detail from a source;

b) another scholar has expressed a particular idea in an especially interesting or useful way.

In both cases, the quotation needs to be enclosed in double quotation marks ("..."), to distinguish it clearly from those parts which you have expressed in your own words. Quotations of more than 40 words should also be indented, as shown in the example below:

One crucial aspect has remained particularly underdeveloped in this discussion: the question of the economic basis underlying the possible emergence of complex social structures. One of the few voices addressing this matter notes the absence of economic changes necessary for such a development:

“Indicators that point to the presence of a controlled surplus economy are totally absent. The settlements are small, with no remains suggesting the presence of a ruling class that is in control of the economy. Nowhere to the west of the Taurus range, there are temples, monumental public buildings, communal storage facilities or socially differentiated buildings. [...] This does not imply that there was not a ruling social group; but it seems evident that this ruling social body was not interested either in the accumulation or in the distribution of commodities.” (Özdoğan, 2002, 67–8).

This statement contrasts dramatically with a recent analysis by B. Arbuckle (2012) who investigated pastoral strategies followed at a number of Central Anatolian sites. Arbuckle suggests the presence of a managerial elite, systematic surplus production and complex economic relationships for the Late Chalcolithic.

3.2. Whenever you use something that you have found in someone else’s work, you must provide a full reference to the source which you used

Regardless of whether you are paraphrasing something that you have read, or quoting it directly, you must also provide a reference to show the reader where you got your information. We do this in order to leave a ‘paper trail’ that readers (and examiners) can use to find the original source.

In archaeology, references are usually placed in round brackets at the end of the sentence to which they apply. Here, the author’s surname, the year of publication and the relevant page(s) are given. (Footnotes are not permitted in your assignments, as they are generally not used in archaeology publications). This abbreviated citation refers to a full entry in an
alphabetically ordered bibliography at the end of your paper. This is shown in the following example:

Specifically, the successful hunting of wild boar often requires highly skilled dogs, which are prized above all others, and without which many hunters attest boar hunting would be virtually impossible (Bulmer, 1968, 315; Dwyer, 1983, 162–3). The effectiveness of hunting dogs in the Pacific Coast Jōmon environment, along with the presence of many dog burials in this region, indicates that Jōmon hunters were probably using dogs as tools for the hunting of sika deer and wild boar, as hunters in Japan still do today.

**Bibliography**


In this example, the first sentence is paraphrasing the ideas of other people, and so has been supplied with references in brackets. The second sentence has no reference, which shows that the opinion contained within it is the author’s own interpretation.

Sometimes it is appropriate to cite more than one source in support of the same point. They should be placed in the same set of brackets at the end of the relevant sentence, and listed in chronological order, with the earliest published source given first, as in the example above.

3.3. **All references should refer accurately and honestly to the specific source which you used**

Sometimes you will wish to make use of information which you have obtained at second hand. This might be through one archaeologist’s summary of another’s work, or through a lecture handout containing a useful extract from a source that you have not otherwise read.

Second-hand information of this kind is perfectly acceptable, as long as it is accurately and honestly acknowledged in your references. The following examples show some of the ways that you can indicate this to your reader:

(Hamerow, 1993; quoted in course handout)
(Hodder, 1976; summarized in Johnson, 2010, 103)

**Citing websites**

Although external websites should not constitute the bulk of your reading, you can use them when they are genuinely appropriate (see Part 1 above).

In order to assess an electronic source, you need to identify its origin. Are you reading a scan of an article that was previously published in a physical format, or an ebook which you have found through the library? If so, then you can simply handle it as if it were a physical article or book, and cite it like the examples in the previous pages.
If instead you are reading a third-party website, then you need to take extra care and provide more information for your reader. Any references to such websites need to be provided with their exact URL address in the bibliography, and a note of the date at which you accessed that site (in case the site is updated in future).

**In-text reference:**
(Digital Egypt for Universities website)

**In the bibliography:**

Ideally, you should also provide the name of the author(s) and the date of publication. If a website does not provide such information, it can often be a sign that you should treat its contents with caution.

### 3.4. Failing to give an accurate and honest account of your sources, or failing to provide a reference for information which you have taken from elsewhere, are examples of plagiarism

By following the steps above, you will be able to show the examiners that you can distinguish your own ideas from those of others, and that you can accurately document all the sources which helped you produce the essay.

Essays which do not accurately cite their sources will be guilty of plagiarism – that is, they will have passed off the work of others as their own. This is a form of dishonesty that runs counter to the principles of academic study, and is therefore taken very seriously by the University. This is true regardless of whether or not there was any deliberate intention to cheat. Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism, and all suspected cases will be reported to the School Academic Conduct Officer, and may be investigated by the College Academic Misconduct Officer. Plagiarised work may lead to a heavy deduction of marks, or result in the essay being given a mark of zero.

Examples of plagiarism include:
- copying the exact wording of sentences without marking them as quotations;
- paraphrasing someone else’s work without referring to the source of that material in a reference;
- closely following the stages of another person’s argument without also offering original opinions of your own;
- using another person’s material without acknowledging it (regardless of whether or not that person gave permission for re-use);
- letting another person write all or part of your essay for you;
- buying or being allowed to copy another person’s essay, whether in whole or in part.

**Self-plagiarism is still plagiarism.**

Students should be aware that the University also considers self-plagiarism to be a form of academic misconduct. If you have already submitted a piece of work for assessment, you cannot submit it again, nor copy any section of it into a new piece of coursework. Every student who submits a piece of work signs a declaration to that effect, and is expected to hold to this rule. If you are concerned about potential overlap between different pieces of coursework, then this is something which you should discuss with your tutor or supervisor at the earliest opportunity.
3.5. Accurate note-taking and citation is essential for avoiding plagiarism

You must ensure that you take full and accurate notes when conducting research for your essays. Make sure that you know whether you have copied down someone else’s words, or whether you have paraphrased them in your own words. Whenever you make a note of anything you find in a book or article, make sure that you have also kept a record of exactly where that information came from (which book or article? who wrote it? which page?).