

From Brainstorm to Brilliance: **Writing better essays**

Where are you getting stuck with essay-writing?

What feedback are you getting from your markers?

Where are your weaknesses?

The Basics: The 5 Friends

A helpful framework for approaching assessments

[Dashboard](#)

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Hi, Maja! 🙌

Did you know?

Did you know that you can change your contact

Course overview

All

In progress

Future

Past

Starred

Removed from view

Writing Assignments & Referencing

Studying at Home Info

Student Support Contact Details

Book a Student Support Appointment

Using the Library

Online Learning Tools

Further Information & Resources



Where do I start?

How do I get going?

How do I get unstuck?

How do I make it good?



Your 5 friends



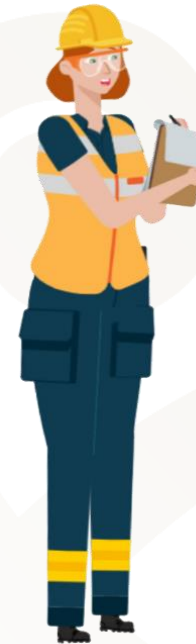
Brainstormer



Hunter-
Gatherer



Architect



Builder



Judge

The Brainstormer

- explores ideas
- dreams up possible directions

What is the assessment question asking?

What do you already know?

What gaps do you need to fill?

No idea is too wild right now!



The Hunter-Gatherer

- seeks resources
- finds the material you need to answer your question

What search terms are best?

What resources could you use?

What resources are actually helpful?

What resources are good quality?

What do you need to gather from each resource?



The Architect



- organises ideas
- structures your assignment

What structure works best for this assignment?

How can you group the ideas?

How can I order the ideas?

How can I balance the ideas?

What ideas should be left out?

The Builder

- Constructs the draft
- Follows the plan one paragraph at a time
- Trims and strengthens



The Judge

- edits your work
- trims and strengthens
- proofreads

Have you answered the question?

Have you met the criteria? Check the rubric!

How strong are your arguments?

What can you trim and sharpen?

Proofread for errors and double-check citations



Writing better essays

Moving beyond the basics

Make sure you are doing what you're asked to do

- Are you *really* answering the assessment question?
- Are you meeting the criteria?
 - Aim for the A range in the rubric
- Use quality sources
 - Use the CADO's bibliography

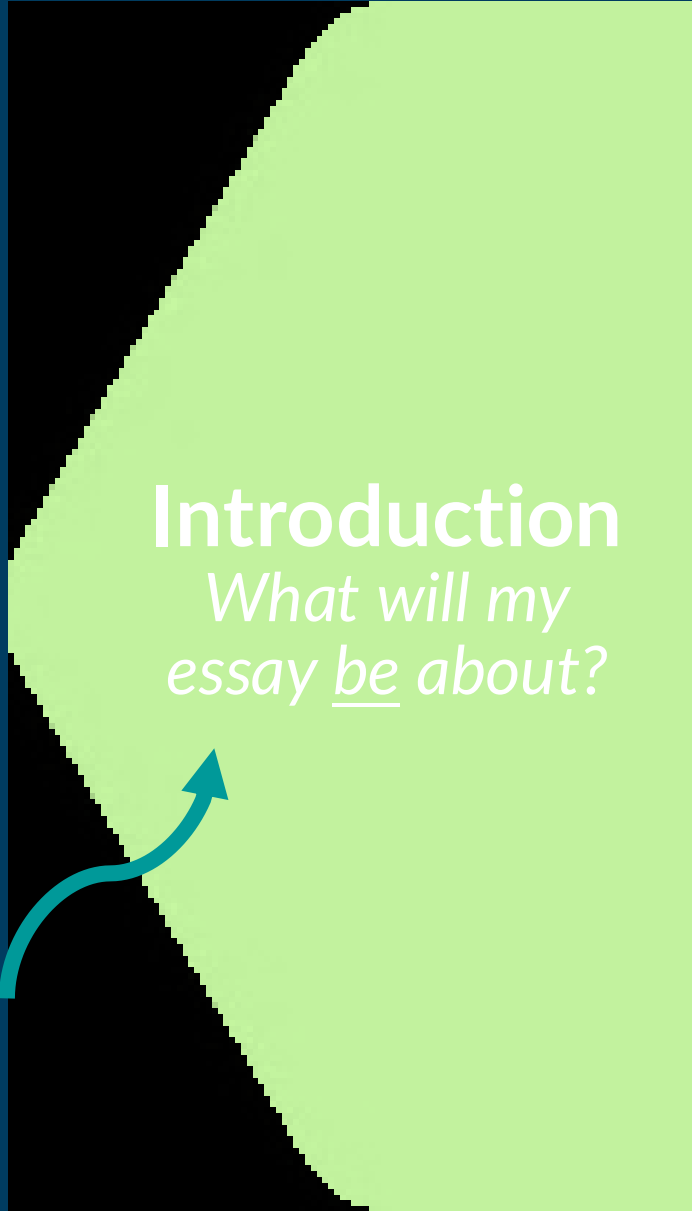
*An essay is **your opinion** about a **little bit of subject**,
in which you use **evidence** to support your opinion.*

- All that research gives you **evidence** – but what is your opinion?
- What points will you need to make to **support your opinion**?

Intuitive? Structured?



Facebook, “Banana for Scale”, 2025



Introduction

*What will my
essay be about?*

*Mention the
specifics, but don't
discuss anything
just yet*

Introduce - Why is this topic interesting from the perspective of the discipline/field?

Focus - As necessary, indicate relevant debate, previous research, problem, definitions, etc.

Structure - Tell the reader the sequence of your sections/ issues in the body of your essay

Indicate - Indicate your answer to the underlying question

Draw together your findings from each
section of your argument

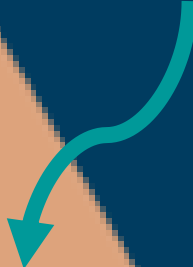
State your conclusion based on your
findings

Consider the implications of your
evaluation for the wider subject

Conclusion

*What has my
essay been about?*

*No new
information!*



Introduction

*What will my
essay be about?*

Body Paragraph 1

Body Paragraph 2

Body Paragraph 3

Conclusion

*What has my
essay been about?*

Assigning Word Count

2000 words

+/- 10%

Minimum = 1800

Maximum = 2200

Introduction

*What will my
essay be about?*

10%

= 200

Body Paragraph 1

Approx. 500 each

Body Paragraph 2

Approx. 500 each

Body Paragraph 3

Approx. 500 each

Conclusion

*What has my
essay been about?*

10%

= 200

Introduction

*What will my
essay be about?*

10%

Context

Themes

1

2

3

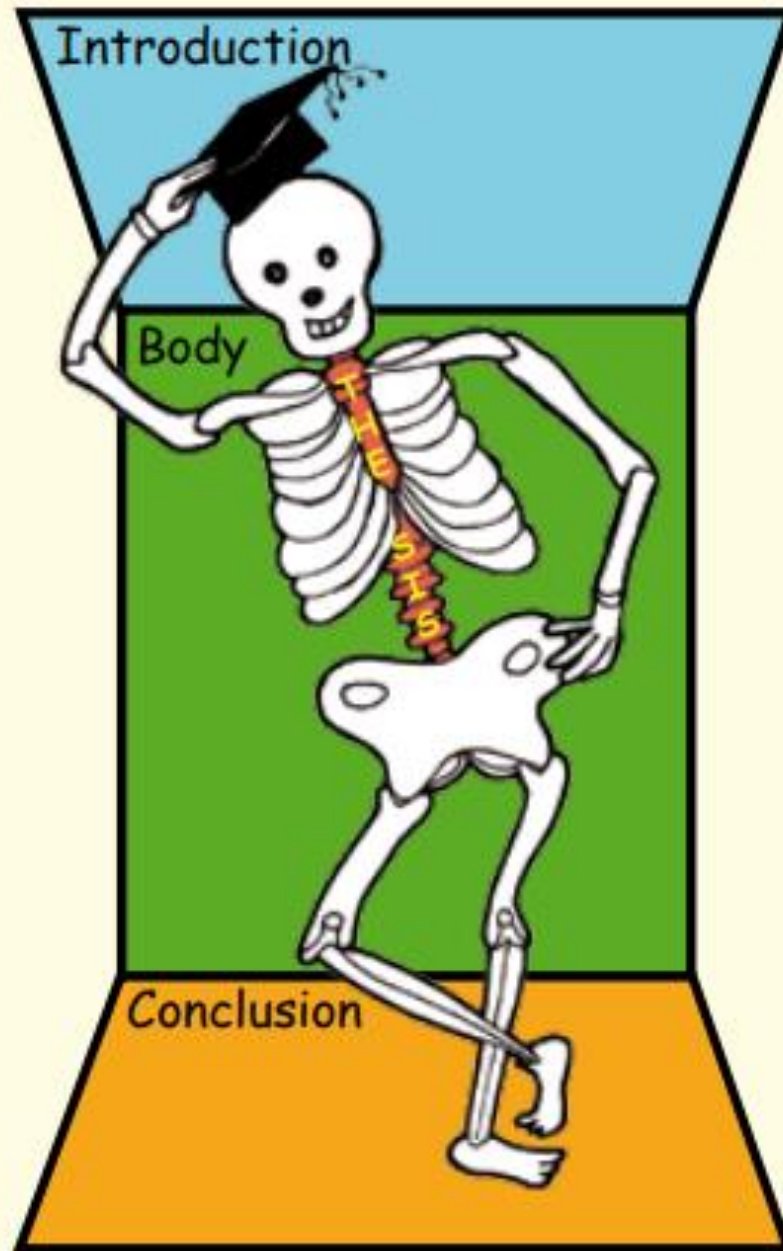
Contribution

Impact

Conclusion

*What has my
essay been about?*

10%



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The Architect

Completion ▾



The Builder

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The Judge

Completion ▾



A Visual Guide to Essay Writing



Referencing



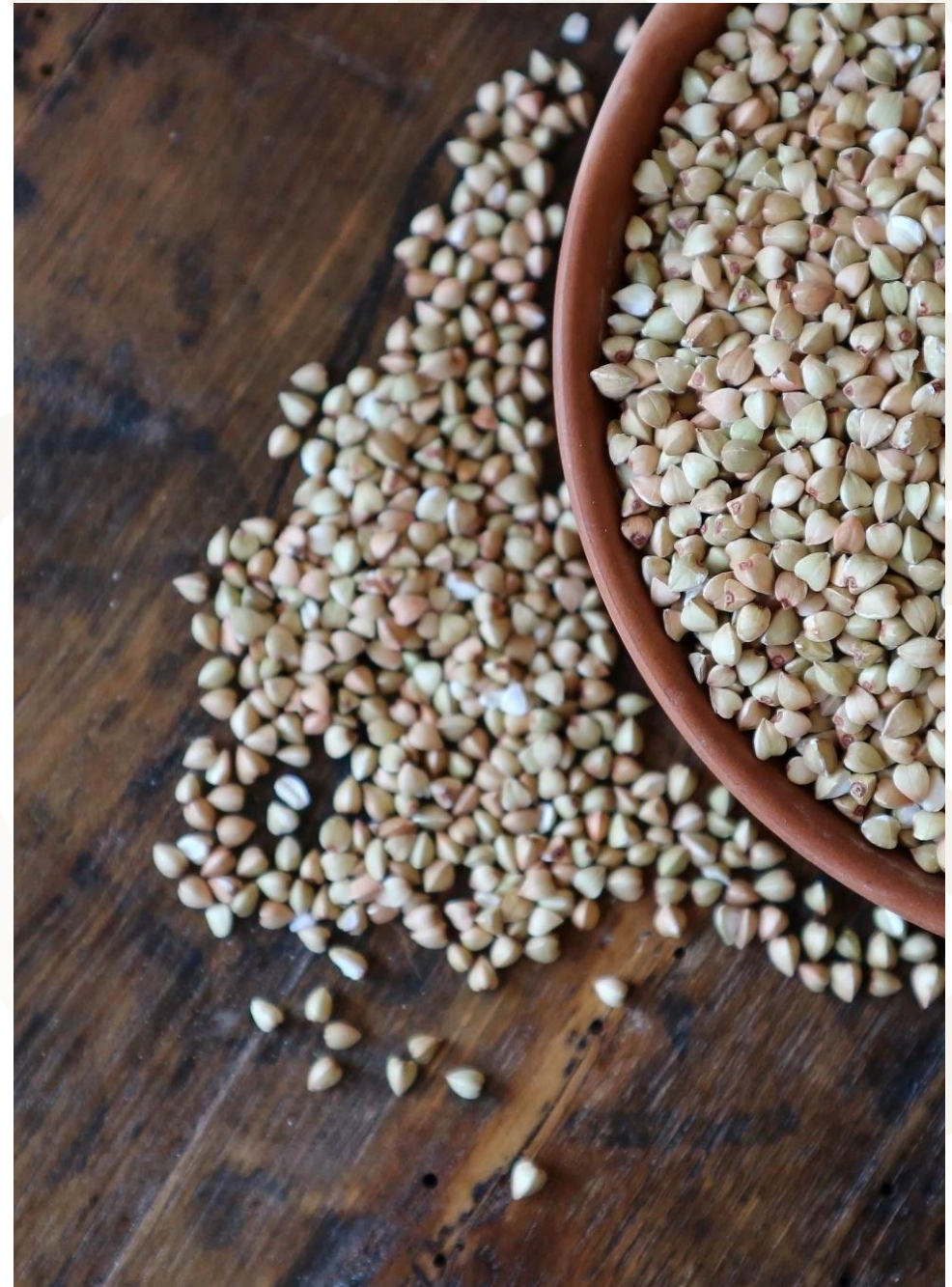
MEAL plan for paragraphs

- Main Point
- Evidence
- Analysis
- Link back to your argument



SEED plan for paragraphs

- Statement
- Evidence
- Explanation
- Development (of your argument)



- **Main Point**

the big idea or claim of the paragraph

- **Evidence**

specific examples that support your main point

- **Analysis**

commentary about the evidence;
why/how does your evidence
support your main point?

- **Link back to your argument**

connect back to your main idea /
transition to the next paragraph



A silly (but informative) example

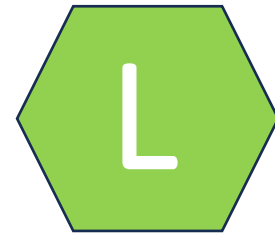
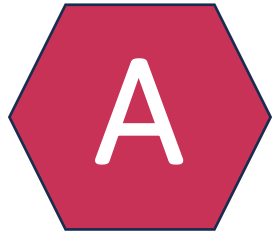
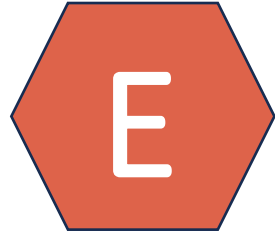
The essay question: The government has proposed that “Pirate Studies” a long-established and valued part of the New Zealand school curriculum should be removed. Argue for or against with evidence.

This essay will argue that Pirate Studies should be retained in the NZ curriculum because:

1. Pirate Studies Develops Valuable Transferable Skills
2. Pirates are participants in human history and contemporary society
3. Pirate Studies Increases Student Engagement and Motivation

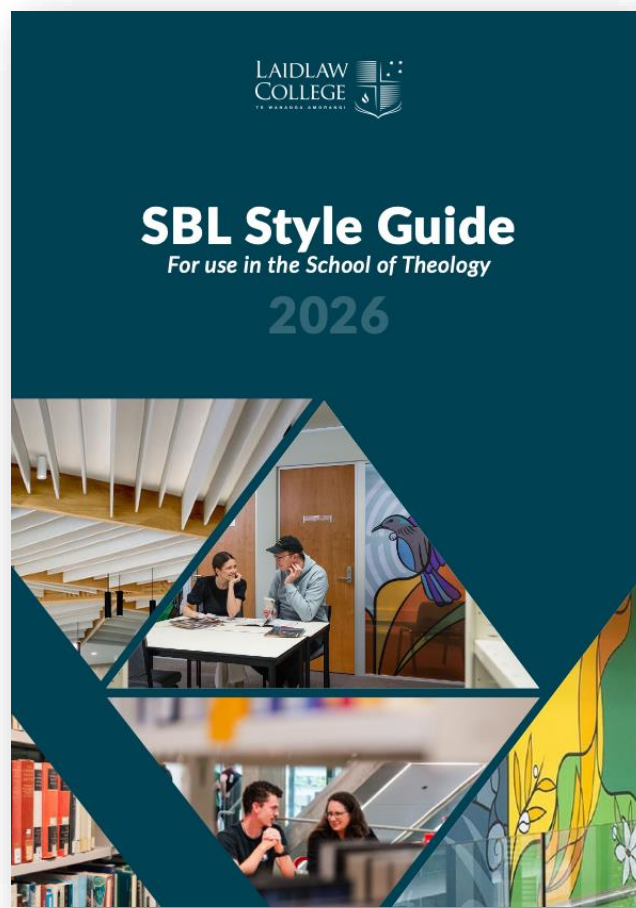
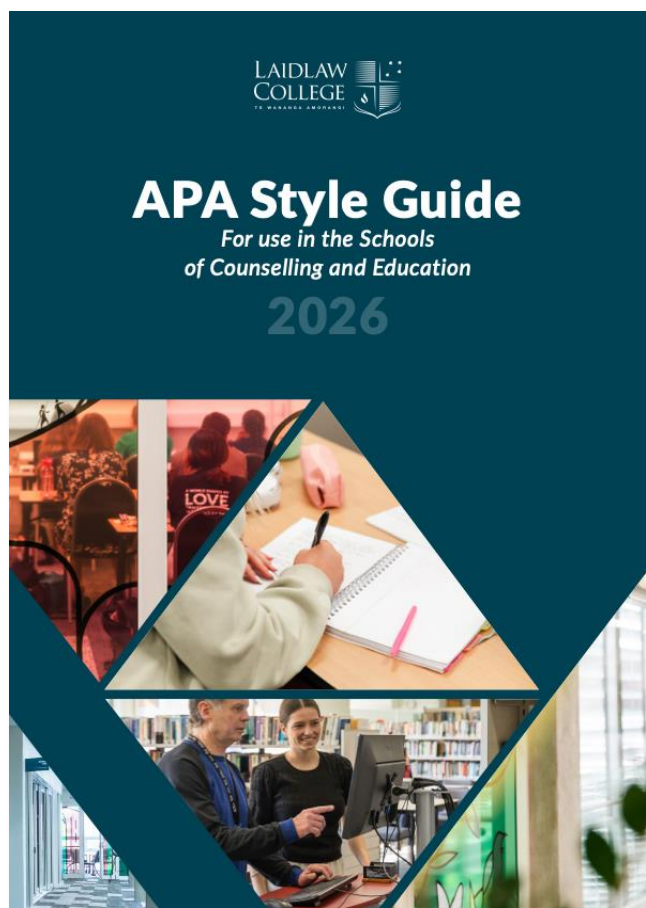
The plan

- Introduction: This essay will argue that Pirate Studies should be retained in the NZ curriculum because:
- Big idea 1: Pirate Studies Develops Valuable Transferable Skills
- **Big idea 2: Pirates are participants in human history and contemporary society**
- Big idea 3: Pirate Studies Increases Student Engagement and Motivation
- Conclusion

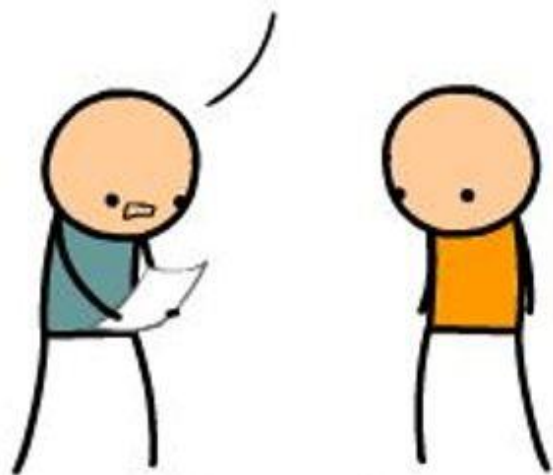


Pirates are valuable participators in human history and continue to contribute positively to society today. Stevenson goes as far as to suggest that had pirates not served as a central component of our nation's history, contemporary society would have failed to exist as we know it.¹ Popular sporting activities, intercultural social relations, corporate financial management, and men's fashion are all recognized as areas which pirates have constructively contributed to throughout the years. In particular, water-based sporting coaches have globally depended upon pirate expertise to discover the way in which not to teach Olympic level diving to new athletes. The life experiences of pirates continue to serve as valuable resources for contemporary society, thus it is paramount that pirate studies not be erased from our school's curriculum. This knowledge needs to be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

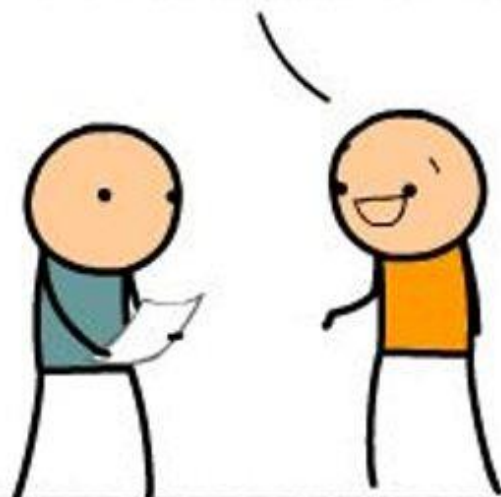
Get your referencing and formatting right



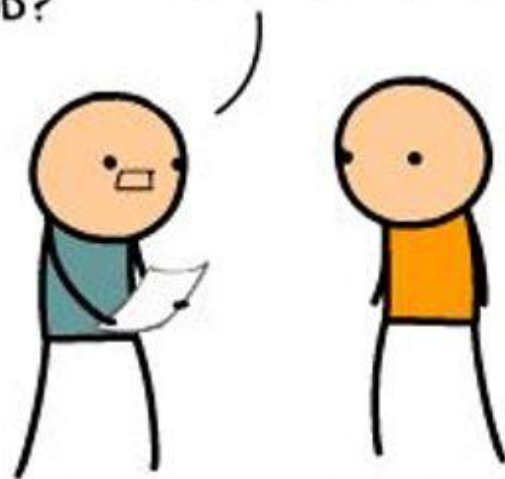
I'VE GOT AN A FOR MY ESSAY



HEY THAT'S GREAT! WELL DONE!



I HAVEN'T HANDED IT IN YET.
ANY OTHER LETTERS I COULD
ADD?



Cyanide and Happiness © Explosm.net

607.615 CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Course Assessment and Delivery Outline

Campus: Henderson, Christchurch, Distance
Lecturer: Rebecca de Jong

Semester 2, 2024
NQF Level 6, 15 credits

1. Research Essay

Length:	2,000 words
Percentage weighting of final grade:	40%
Due date:	11.55pm, Friday of Week 15 (25/10/2024)
Learning outcomes:	1, 3, 4.
Learning hours:	435

Write an essay on either Buddhism or Islam. Examine and describe this religion central belief systems in terms they would recognize as seeking to be fair. Consider how this belief impacts worldview. Analyse and evaluate a range of Christian responses to this religion.

Supplementary instructions, worksheets, resources, and material are supplied in Moodle.

Criteria for Assessment (continued on following page)

Learning Outcome assessed:	A Range (80-100%)	B Range (65-79%)	C Range (50-64%)	Not Achieved (0-49%)
LO1 Appraise the central belief systems of world religions, local religions, and secularism in terms they would recognize as seeking to be fair.				
Criteria 1: Research - Describe the central belief system in terms that religion would recognise as seeking to be fair.	Comprehensively described and thoroughly researched the central belief system in terms that religion would recognise as seeking to be fair.	Good description of the central belief system in terms that religion would recognise as seeking to be fair.	Limited description of the central belief system in terms that religion would recognise as seeking to be fair.	No description of the central belief system in terms that religion would recognise as seeking to be fair.
Criteria 2: Sophisticated analysis of the impact on worldview of the belief systems	Sophisticated analysis of the impact on worldview of a belief system	Good analysis of the impact on worldview of a belief system.	Limited analysis on worldview of a belief system	No analysis of the impact on worldview of a belief system
LO3 Analyse and evaluate a range of Christian responses to interreligious relationships.				
Criteria 3: Critically evaluate a range of Christian responses.	Thorough critical evaluation of a range of Christian responses.	Good evaluation a range of Christian responses.	Limited evaluation a range of Christian responses.	No evaluation a range of Christian responses.

LO4 Analyse the effectiveness of the missionary's interaction, discussing what may be learned for Christian witness.				
Criteria 4: Analyse the factors affecting Christian witness in present-day religious contexts	Insightful analysis of factors affecting Christian witness in present-day religious contexts.	Good analysis of factors affecting Christian witness in present-day religious contexts	Limited analysis of factors affecting Christian witness in present-day religious contexts.	No factors affecting Christian witness discussed.
Additional criteria				
Criteria 5: Written work is clear, grammatically correct, and conforms to Laidlaw College's "Guidelines for Written Assignments."	Presented in correct format. Virtually error free with correct grammar. Consistent	Presented in correct format. Some minor grammar errors.	Attempt to present in correct format. Contains several grammar errors.	Not presented in correct format. Extensive grammar errors.
	referencing throughout.	Referencing has some errors.	Referencing has several errors.	Extensive referencing errors.
Criteria 6: Research: Clear and appropriate utilisation of and interaction with at least 7 scholarly resources.	7 or more scholarly sources were meaningfully utilised.	Some scholarly sources were utilised in minimal ways.	A limited amount of scholarly sources were referred to.	No scholarly sources have been meaningfully used.

Additional criteria:				
6. Written work is clear, grammatically correct, and conforms to Laidlaw College's "Guidelines for Written Assignments."	Presented in correct format. Virtually error free with correct grammar. Consistent referencing throughout.	Presented in correct format. Some minor grammatical and referencing errors in places.	Presented in correct format. Contains several grammar errors. Referencing has several errors.	Not presented in correct format, and/or extensive grammar errors, and/or extensive referencing errors.
7. Research: Clear and appropriate utilisation of and interaction with at least 9 scholarly resources (books, journal articles etc.)	9 or more scholarly sources from a wide range resource (i.e. books and journal articles) are meaningfully utilised.	9 or more scholarly sources from a range of resource (i.e. books and journal articles) were utilised in effective ways.	9 or more scholarly sources are appropriately used.	Fewer than 9 scholarly sources are utilized.

Let's plan an essay!

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Sample essay with feedback