

## **Week IV**

### **The Essay Section of the Exam**

The essay section of the *Magister* exam is your opportunity to demonstrate your ability to write an English argumentative essay in appropriate academic style. You cannot write a term paper in two hours, but you can write its miniature counterpart, often called the “Five Paragraph Essay”, in that time. Your paper must argue a point (thesis), but the essay topics are chosen so that you can write a simple position paper based on general knowledge. The position that you argue is not important, however, there needs to be clarity of argumentation, organization and language.

#### **Grading**

Your essay will be marked on the following:

1. Accuracy of language
2. Fluency of language
3. Lexis, including breadth and accuracy of vocabulary
4. Content and Organisation, i.e. task fulfillment

#### **The Writing Process**

- 1. Creating (Prewriting)**
  - a. Choose a topic
  - b. Generate ideas
    - i. Listing
    - ii. Freewriting
    - iii. Clustering (Mindmapping)
- 2. Plan (Outlining)**
  - a. Make sublists (rough outline)
  - b. Write formal outline
- 3. Write**
- 4. Review (Polish)**
  - a. Revise
  - b. Edit (Proofread)

#### **Essay Format**

The essay formats outlined on the following pages are not obligatory for your exam, but you are encouraged to use one of them to ensure that your work is well-structured and appropriate for an academic context. Naturally you may write a six or seven paragraph essay, i.e. one with more than three supporting paragraphs. However, you are under a time limit and quality counts more than quantity, so a five-paragraph essay will be sufficient in most cases.

# Essay Format: Example 1

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## INTRODUCTION

- Hook/Lead/ Attention-getting opener
- Connecting Information
- Thesis Statement (may mention the opposing point of view, but always states clearly which side you are for)

## BODY

### First Supporting Paragraph (pro argument 1)

- first subtopic (re)stated in a topic sentence
- supporting pieces of evidence, details, explanations, examples etc.
- concluding sentence summarising evidence for thesis gained from first subtopic and/or transition sentence

### Second Supporting Paragraph (pro argument 2)

- second subtopic (re)stated in a topic sentence
- supporting pieces of evidence, details, explanations, examples etc.
- concluding sentence summarising evidence for thesis gained from second subtopic and/or transition sentence

### Third Supporting Paragraph (pro argument 3)

- third subtopic (re)stated in a topic sentence
- supporting pieces of evidence, details, explanations, examples etc.
- concluding sentence summarising evidence for thesis gained from third subtopic and/or transition sentence

### Counterargument and Refutation Paragraph

- counterargument
- refutation of counterargument
- concluding sentence and/or transition sentence

## CONCLUSION

- summary and synthesis of evidence for the thesis
- strong concluding line, i.e. leave the reader with something to think about and include your opinion

## Essay Format: Example 2

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- Paragraph One is the *INTRODUCTION*. Using an attention-grabbing opener (“topical hook”), it introduces the issue to the reader. It ends with the presentation of the writer’s view on the issue: the *THESIS*. The thesis needs to be worded as a clear opinion statement.
  - Paragraph Two presents the first argument in a clear *TOPIC SENTENCE*, which is followed by supporting pieces of evidence, details, examples etc. The refutation of the respective counterargument can be explicitly or implicitly included.
  - Paragraph Three presents the second argument in a clear *TOPIC SENTENCE*, which is followed by supporting pieces of evidence, details, examples etc. The refutation of the respective counterargument can be explicitly or implicitly included.
  - Paragraph Four presents the third argument in a clear *TOPIC SENTENCE*, which is followed by supporting pieces of evidence, details, examples etc. The refutation of the respective counterargument can be explicitly or implicitly included.
- Paragraph Five is the *CONCLUSION*. It summarizes the author’s position and evidence, and it should finish with a strong final sentence. Sometimes, it is possible to return to the topical hook from the introduction, thus creating a nice “wrap-up” which brings the essay to a close.

adapted from: [http://www.geocities.com/frankie\\_meehan/FivePara.htm](http://www.geocities.com/frankie_meehan/FivePara.htm)

## Essay Format: Example 3

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### **BLOCK PATTERN**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- Hook/Lead/Attention-getting opener
- Explanation of the issue
- Thesis Statement

#### **BODY**

##### **Block 1**

- Summary of other side's arguments
- Rebuttal to the first argument
- Rebuttal to the second argument
- Rebuttal to the third argument

##### **Block 2**

- Your first argument
- Your second argument
- Your third argument

#### **CONCLUSION**

- include a summary of your point of view
- leave the reader with something to think about

### **Common Errors in Academic Essay Writing**

The following is a brief list of some of the commonly made errors in the essay section of the exam.

- Absolutist statements, i.e. lack of hedging
- Long vs. short genitives
- Position of adverbials/Overuse of adverbials
- Non-use of singular "they"
- Punctuation, especially with relative clauses
- Referents (it, the, that etc.) + dangling modifiers
- Word Forms, especially adverbs vs. adjectives
- Inappropriate use of metalanguage

## Counter-Argument and Refutation

When you counter-argue, you consider a possible argument *against* your thesis or some aspect of your reasoning. It can be a persuasive and disarming tactic. It allows you to anticipate doubts and pre-empt objections that a sceptical reader might have; it presents you as the kind of person who weighs alternatives before arguing for one, who confronts difficulties instead of sweeping them under the rug, who is more interested in discovering the truth than winning a point.

Not every objection is worth entertaining, of course, and you shouldn't include one just to include one. But some imagining of other views, or of resistance to one's own, occurs in most good essays.

Counter-argument in an essay has two stages: you turn against your argument to challenge it and then you turn back to re-affirm it. You first imagine a sceptical reader, or cite an actual source, who might resist your argument by pointing out

- a problem with your demonstration, e.g. that a different conclusion could be drawn from the same facts, a key assumption is unwarranted, a key term is used unfairly, certain evidence is ignored or played down;
- one or more disadvantages or practical drawbacks to what you propose;
- an alternative explanation or proposal that makes more sense.

You introduce this turn against with a phrase like *One might object here that...* or *It might seem that...* or *It's true that...* or *Admittedly,...* or *Of course,...* or with an anticipated challenging question: *But how...?* or *But why...?* or *But isn't this just...?* or *But if this is so, what about...?* Then you state the case against yourself as briefly but as clearly and forcefully as you can, pointing to evidence where possible.

Your return to your own argument—which you announce with a *but, yet, however, nevertheless or still*—must likewise involve careful reasoning, not a flippant dismissal. In reasoning about the proposed counter-argument, you may

- refute it, showing why it is mistaken—an apparent but not real problem;
- acknowledge its validity or plausibility, but suggest why on balance it's relatively less important or less likely than what you propose, and thus doesn't overturn it;
- concede its force and complicate your idea accordingly—restate your thesis in a more exact, qualified, or nuanced way that takes account of the objection, or start a new section in which you consider your topic in light of it. This will work if the counter-argument concerns only an aspect of your argument; if it undermines your whole case, you need a new thesis.

### **Where to Put a Counter-Argument**

Counter-argument can appear anywhere in the essay, but it most commonly appears

- as part of your introduction—before you propose your thesis—where the existence of a different view is the motive for your essay, the reason it needs writing;
- as a section or paragraph just after your introduction, in which you lay out the expected reaction or standard position before turning away to develop your own;
- as a quick move within a paragraph, where you imagine a counter-argument not to your main idea but to the sub-idea that the paragraph is arguing or is about to argue;
- as a section or paragraph just before the conclusion of your essay, in which you imagine what someone might object to what you have argued.

But watch that you don't overdo it. A turn into counter-argument here and there will sharpen and energize your essay, but too many such turns will have the reverse effect by obscuring your main idea or suggesting that you're ambivalent.

adapted from: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/Counterarg.html>

**Argumentative Essay Outline**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

I. Introduction (paragraph 1)

A. Hook: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Connecting Information

C. Thesis Statement:

\_\_\_\_\_

II. Body

A. Paragraph 2

1. Topic sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Supporting Ideas

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Paragraph 3

1. Topic sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Supporting Ideas

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

C. Paragraph 4

1. Topic sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Supporting Ideas

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

D. Paragraph 5 (Counterargument and refutation)

1. Counterargument: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Refutation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

III. Conclusion (paragraph 5)

Final thoughts on the topic (prediction/consequences/solution/recommendation/call for action etc.)

### Exam Errors

The following examples are actual essay errors from previous *Magister* exams. Identify the error/s and make the appropriate corrections if possible.

1. Lacking skills older people sometimes have physical handicaps which makes driving harder.
2. When people get older the human body suffers under numerous handicaps.
3. The first thing to do is to proof your sight.
4. The sound of the own car...
5. The sound of an own car ...
6. They often loose their trust in their own abilities.
7. To handle situations like this you need training.
8. Children are not able to have friendships with other children at home.
9. The child is lacking social contacts.
10. With increasing age old people are going to be less responsive.
11. There were fewer cars on the streets and they might have learnt different traffic rules and signs.
12. Today, everyone wants to drive his own car.
13. Children have to adjust to the speed and way of teaching which is not as supportive as homeschooling.
14. Greece and Austria have established electoral systems where voting is compulsory.
15. Of course, the voting participation would rise to 100 percent.
16. ... the free will of the individual to take part in the political processes of his country.
17. Sometimes being a danger in traffic, the government should require them to retake their driving test at a certain age.
18. ...to drive more safe

19. The believe in capitalism and wealth for everyone is ...
20. It is impossible for the child to develop social competence at home in a family environment.
21. They do not have to leave the house for attending school.
22. The money could be spend as tuition fees.
23. Children are able to live in a save and isolated environment.
24. ...are killed by car accidents.
25. ...loose control over their cars.
26. Skills of teaching
27. A basic knowledge on
28. So far, homeschooling is illegal in Germany.
29. Children, who are educated at home, ....
30. Senior citizens have physical problems which limit their ability to drive a vehicle safely.
31. Everyone can decide for him- or herself if he or she wants to make a contribution to the state.
32. Participation in polls
33. Provide to
34. Get the chance for
35. Discussing about
36. No contact to
37. Discriminate \_\_\_\_\_
38. Make experience





Technische Universität Chemnitz  
Magisterprüfung  
Anglistik/Amerikanistik  
Sprachpraxis

**Wintersemester 2009/2010**

Aufsatz zur Prüfung des freien Ausdrucksvermögens

Zeit: 2 Stunden

- (1) Nutzen Sie das gestempelte Papier für Ihr Konzept und das gedruckte Papier für Ihre Endfassung. Es muss deutlich erkennbar sein, welche Ihre Konzept- und welche Ihre Endfassung ist!
- (2) Schreiben Sie auf jedes Blatt, das Sie nutzen, Ihre Matrikelnummer.
- (3) Geben Sie bei Ihrer Endfassung an, ob Sie den Standards für American English (AE) oder British English (BE) folgen.
- (4) Schreiben Sie bei Ihrer Endfassung nur auf den durchgezogenen Linien.
- (5) Sie dürfen ein einsprachiges Wörterbuch verwenden.
- (6) Zählen Sie Ihre Wörter in der Endfassung.

**Please write an essay of about 400-600 words on one of the following topics. You have two hours to complete the test, and you may use a monolingual dictionary. Please write your word count at the end of your essay.**

- a) In some countries such as Greece or Austria, citizens not only have the right to vote, but they are obliged to go to the polls. In light of the current low voter participation in Germany, some politicians have suggested introducing a similar system here. Should voting in elections be compulsory? Discuss.
- b) Homeschooling is a legal option in many countries for parents to provide their children with a learning environment as an alternative to publicly provided schools. In other countries – among them Germany – homeschooling is considered illegal. Should parents be allowed to educate their children at home? Discuss.
- c) A number of countries including some states in the US and Australia require senior citizens to retake the practical part of their driving test when they reach a certain age. A similar suggestion has been put forward in Germany, proposing a test for every driver 65 years and older. Is this an example of ageism or a legitimate attempt to make our roads safer? To what extent do you agree or disagree with this practice?

## Additional Essay Topics from Previous Exam Papers

### SS 2009

- d) A number of countries have introduced fines and greater penalties for parents of truant children although parents or caregivers are often unaware that their child is absent from school. It is said that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?
- e) Paintball is a modern way to play cops and robbers, and people who play it say it is a harmless sport. However, a working group composed of experts from Germany's state and federal interior ministries say paintball is dehumanising and encourages violence. They want politicians to draw consequences from the school massacre in Winnenden and ban such games. In your opinion, should paintball be banned? Discuss.
- f) In most content-related courses at university, students are assessed through an in-class presentation and a term paper at the end of the semester. Are these the best means of assessing your understanding of the content in the respective field? Discuss.

### WS 2008/2009

- g) DWT is the abbreviation for 'Driving while Texting,' i.e. operating a vehicle while typing or sending a text message on a mobile device. The UK is currently considering severe penalties for DWT drivers, including prison sentences of 2 to 5 years, for 'dangerous drivers' distracted by text messaging (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/top-stories/2008/07/16/>). Should Germany follow the UK's lead? Explain why or why not.
- h) Obesity is continuously increasing in Germany and other Western countries. Only one third of German adults exhibit a healthy body weight, and the ever-growing cost of nutrition-related illnesses is presently at an estimated 70 billion Euros per year, or 30 per cent of Germany's overall health costs (<http://www.healthnews.com/nutrition-diet/>). Should the German government (or anyone else) take measures to fight obesity? If yes, why and how? If no, why not? Explain.
- i) A recently published study on news selection behavior in the US revealed that "the proportion of young people (under 25 years) who did not access any news on a typical day grew by more than a third – from 25 per cent to 34 per cent over the past ten years."  
([http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech\\_and\\_web/article4559162.ece](http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/article4559162.ece))  
Is this a development we should be worried about? If no, why not? If yes, why, and what should be done to change this trend?

### SS 2008

- j) Focusing too much on their content-related classes in the fields of Literature, Linguistics and Cultural Studies, students of English fail to do enough to improve their English language skills. Discuss.

- k) Holding the Olympic Games 2008 in China – mistake or chance?
- l) “The German welfare state is in its final throes.” Discuss.

#### **WS 2007/2008**

- m) Who should have the right to determine store opening hours in Germany? The government? The store owners? Anyone else?

#### **WS 2007/2008 cont'd**

- n) Should a year abroad be obligatory for every German student of English?
- o) Germany should introduce a speed limit on the freeway/motorway similar to all the other European countries. Discuss.

#### **WS 2007/2008 Retake**

- p) Students in their first semesters should not question and criticize academic theories. Discuss.
- q) Children raised by homosexual couples will have difficulties in finding their place in society. Discuss.
- r) Thanks to new technologies such as computers and the internet, everyone can be a brilliant scholar. Discuss.

#### **WS 2006/2007 (SE)**

- s) Drug use or doping in sports seems to be a growing problem, especially in international sports. Recently, participants in the ‘Tour de France’, including some Germans, had to withdraw from the competition because of alleged doping. Is the super competition associated with international sport not putting too much pressure on the athletes? Can this problem ever be really properly controlled? Discuss.
- t) Organic foods are becoming more and more popular in Germany, but the price is high. Often the price is 50 percent or even 100 percent more than non-organic foods. Are these foods really worth the extra money? And if so, if organic foods are really better and safer for us, should we have to pay so much more just to eat? Should they not be the standard fare for everybody? Discuss.

#### **WS 2004/2005**

- u) In what way do cultural differences make studying abroad both interesting and challenging? If you had a chance to work in your favourite foreign city, how would you conduct a study of local culture?
- v) In what way would tuition fees help or hurt higher education? Is higher education something to be valued, i.e. expensive, or should it be free?
- w) CD’s and DVD’s are no longer bought in regular shops but “stolen” from the internet as pirated copies. How will this affect the international entertainment industry in the long run? Should the governments intervene (and, if yes, how?)

or, is it an achievement to be able to provide equal access to music and culture for everybody?

#### **WS 2004/2005 (SE)**

- x) German songs for German culture? Can German cultural identity be strengthened if radio stations have to play a certain percentage of songs in German as it is in France today? Or, is modern culture a world culture, which can only be expressed in English?
- y) Travelling broadens the horizon. Does it really, or do we have to work for it?

#### **SS 2004**

- z) University life is changing fast. Old degrees are being phased out. New English-American style degrees are now being offered. There are now BA's and MA's. The study programs have been changed to fit the new time frames – three years for a BA, plus two more for an MA. Is this going to be an advantage for society in the long run? Won't it be a disadvantage for students? How will it affect their lives? Discuss. (*NB: tense of question updated*)
- aa) Britain, the USA and now even Germany, as well, are installing CCTV/video cameras almost everywhere in order to keep watch on their citizens in the name of national security and public safety. Are we not becoming too transparent as individuals? Do we not have a right to privacy, or does society have a right to know? Discuss.
- bb) It has been said we are the product of our culture and of our advertising system. In what ways do you think advertising influences and shapes our lives, our perceptions of society? Are we slaves to public fashion and the private companies bombarding us each day with their ads? Discuss.

#### **SS 2004 (SE)**

- cc) Many young people, and sometimes not so young, risk their, and often other people's, safety and health by participating in extreme sports, for example, bungee-jumping or extreme forms of surfing and snowboarding. Why is this trend on the increase, and should we try to protect these extreme athletes from themselves? Can society afford the costs that are incurred through these sports? Discuss.
- dd) The WWW allows open access to information on all sorts of topics. In what ways are such modern forms of media dangerous to young people? What role do they play in youth violence, in excessive consumerism, in anti-social behaviour? Can and should this open access be restricted? Discuss.

#### **WS 2003/2004**

- ee) Cloned food is coming to our kitchen tables. Do we really know what this is? Do even the scientists really know? Can the long-term consequences of such fundamental manipulation of nature be known in a few short years of scientific

studies? Can we really trust our governments to be thorough and honest in the handling of such issues? Discuss.

### **WS 2002/2003 (SE)**

ff) Globalisation is now being strongly questioned. The financial cultures of the rich countries are very strongly for it, while many of the poorer countries, and especially the poor people in them, are questioning the possibility of it ever being fair and thus beneficial for them. Can it be achieved in a fair way? Are there really honest, impartial international organisations to oversee and control it? Or will the financial elites always exploit a situation to the maximum of their advantage? Discuss.

### **SS 2002**

gg) Explosive violent acts are now breaking out in the heart of Europe. It is not just happening in America. Terrorists have a political cause to follow – but young students? Why and how could they act in this way? Is the violence on the media having an effect on them? Are the video games actually making children aggressive? Are parents neglecting their children because they are always lost in TV land? Discuss.

hh) Computers and the internet are continuing their rapid growth and conquest of the whole world in spite of a momentary economic slowdown. But are these technological advances bringing people of the third world real, lasting benefits? Can these people make the jump from fairly primitive living conditions to making use of the most advanced technology? Or, are we condemning them to being exploited and dominated by the shadow sides of these new electronic tools because they have no cultural strength to resist or control them? Discuss.

ii) The German government is finding it harder and harder to finance traditional social programs. There is too little tax revenue to go around for all the areas that need it. Cutbacks in many areas have already begun. One example: more of the University's teaching staff will have to be laid off. Can German society and especially young people adapt to this situation of having less money for education? Or, can new ways be found to educate students that are cheaper than the present system? Or, should new sources of tax revenue be found in order to continue the old system? Discuss.

### **SS 2002 (SE)**

jj) There has been a lot of discussion about the increasing problem of 'overweightness' in America. Obesity causes many medical problems in later life and thus results in much higher medical costs for health care programs. What are the causes of this situation in our present-day society? Can this problem perhaps be fought by governments taxing luxury foods, or by fixing higher medical premiums for those who are overweight, or by other methods? Discuss.