

## Sample Essay Question

*“Discuss the factors that contribute to successful student academic performance at university”*

### SAMPLE ESSAY INTRODUCTION

Why some students succeed at university when others ‘drop out’, or achieve below their academic capacity, has long been of interest to educational psychologists and those working in tertiary education. Uncovering the factors that lead to success has recently become more important, as tertiary institutions in Australia and other western nations are increasingly made accountable for student retention and positive achievement outcomes. The different explanations for successful academic performance at university will be discussed, focusing first on issues related to the institution (teaching practices, environment and availability of student support services) and second on factors related to the student (cognitive ability, personality and behavioural factors and individual approach to learning). In this essay, academic success is taken to mean both completion of a tertiary program and achieving a grade point average (GPA) which corresponds with academic ability (Burton & Dowling, 2005). Overall, it is argued that a complex mix of factors contributes to successful academic performance, not least of which are the attitudes and approaches of students themselves.

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**GOLDEN RULE 1**

INTRODUCE THE READER TO THE ESSAY TOPIC AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Here the reader can see that the topic of the essay is *factors that lead to academic success*. The importance of examining this topic is also highlighted, in this instance because *tertiary institutions are accountable for student retention and achievement outcomes*.

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**GOLDEN RULE 2**

**CLEARLY EXPLAIN THE AIM/PURPOSE OF THE ESSAY**

Here the reader can clearly see how the topic is going to be examined. For this example, the *different explanations for academic success at university* are going to be discussed.

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**GOLDEN RULE 3**

CLEARLY EXPLAIN THE STRUCTURE OF THE ESSAY TO GIVE THE READER A ROADMAP TO FOLLOW

Here the reader can clearly see that issues relating to two main themes which impact academic performance will be discussed. Firstly factors related to the *institution* will be examined, these being teaching practices, the university environment and the availability of support services. This will be followed by a discussion of *student-related factors* that impact success, namely cognitive ability, personality and behavioural traits and individual approach to learning.

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**GOLDEN RULE 4**

DEFINE ANY KEY TERMS NEEDED FOR CLARITY AND UNDERSTANDING

For this essay, it would important to define the term *academic success* for the reader so that arguments presented throughout the essay make sense. You can see that the citation for where this definition was sourced is provided. This is one of the only instances where you would include a citation in an essay introduction.

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**GOLDEN RULE 5**

**CLEARLY OUTLINE YOUR MAIN OVERARCHING ARGUMENT**

Here the final sentence tells the reader the overall argument or thesis statement of the essay. It is clear from this sentence that the body of the essay is going to present a case that demonstrates that, *rather than there being just one predominant influence, evidence suggests that it is a complex mix of both institutional and student-related factors that impact academic performance and success.*