**What structure to choose for my assignment?**

In many assignments there is a wide range of possible structures to choose from.

Sometimes the question suggests a starting point for the structure of your answer, for example, in **listing the topic areas** you are required to cover. Sometimes the instruction words in the **question will suggest a structure**, for example, ‘Compare and contrast…’. Sometimes the structure of one or more of the texts you have read in researching the topic may have a suitable structure that you could **adapt**.

Some assignments have a standard format (e.g. lab reports, case studies) and these will normally be explained in your course materials. At other times you will have to come up with your **own structure**. There are many possibilities – some are based on the subject matter *itself* which may suggest a structure based on chronology, process, location, etc.; others will be based on *your interpretation* of the subject matter – for example, problem/solution, argument/counter-argument, sub-topics in order of importance, etc.

Finally, it is unlikely that any single structure will suit all aspects of the assignment – there may be one overall structure for the assignment as a whole which contains a number of other, combined **sub-structures**. It’s a good idea to brainstorm a few different ways of structuring your assignment once you’ve got a rough idea of what the main issues are. **Do this in outline form before you start writing**– it’s much easier to re-structure an outline than a half-finished essay.

* Do the steps in my argument flow in a connected sequence?
* Does my background information set the scene for my argument?
* Are my assumptions valid and does my reader share them?
* Is my reasoning sound and understandable to the reader?