**How can I create a good plan for the structure of my essay / assignment?**

Creating a good plan is a very positive early step towards writing a good assignment.   
You should begin by analyzing the question and brainstorming some ideas relating to the topic. You should consider what sort of answer is required and what sort of approach you need to take – these will affect the structure of your assignment.

Some assignments have a standard format (e.g. lab reports, case studies) and these will normally be explained in your course materials. However, some assignments don’t have a set structure – typically those which require you to argue a position – and for these you will need to devise a plan (or outline) before you start writing.

1. After your brainstorming you should come up with a provisional thesis statement (a sentence or two which summarizes your overall position on the issue) – this statement represents what your argument is leading to.
2. You should then begin to construct an outline of your argument in dot point form (some people like to do a mind map at this stage, but it will eventually have to be converted into a linear form).
3. You should then read and make notes, questioning and critically appraising the information you find.
4. You need to repeat this process, modifying as necessary all elements as you go along.

All these elements and activities work together:

* Your thesis statement will give direction to your reading; it will help you to ensure that the focus of your research is relevant.
* Reading provides you with new material for your assignment – taking a critical approach to reading allows you to pose challenges and to arrive at new perspectives; it allows you to be original in your work.
* Your outline will change as you absorb more information from your reading and develop your own interpretations to inform your arguments.
* Your outline will also guide you in arriving at an appropriate balance: you’ll see areas which will require more reading, or, conversely, where some sections are becoming too large at the expense of others.

Eventually, you will have a plan which is detailed enough for you to start writing – you will know what ideas go into each section and, ideally, each paragraph; you will also know where to find evidence for those ideas in your notes and the sources of that evidence.

If you are unsure what kind of structure to use, click [here](http://kardan.edu.af/data/public/files/writing-qa-5.docx).