Redesigning Assessment with Generative AI:

The Essay Plan Approach

CASE SCENARIO 1

Students write an essay on the World Wars. The essay question is designed to prompt deep critical thinking, synthesis, and a persuasive argument supported by evidence. If GenAI tools are allowed, the essay question can be more difficult (e.g., requiring analysis, comparisons, critical evaluation, identifying long-term implications of events).

When writing the final essay, students can use AI tools to help still need to critically evaluate, adapt, and synthesize outputs themselves. Students should indicate which parts of the essay were supported by AI tools and how they were used in their plan. They must present a well-argued and critical analysis of the impacts of the World Wars, beyond just what AI tools have generated.

CASE SCENARIO 2

Students are given an AI-generated essay and must deconstruct it to create an essay plan. They should also critique the essay's arguments, evaluate the organization of the essay, and examine whether the evidence is credible and relevant.

This innovative assessment strategy allows students to critically analyze the structure of an essay, understand the importance of a coherent argument, assess the quality of evidence, and learn about the benefits and challenges of GenAI tools.

INTRODUCTION

The Essay Plan is a detailed sketch of an essay, including the main arguments, supporting evidence, counter-arguments, and conclusion. Instead of a complete final essay, students submit a thorough plan that shows their process of generating ideas and structuring arguments to demonstrate understanding.

This approach encourages deep thinking, critical analysis, and the deliberate organization of thoughts. It fosters authenticity by highlighting each student's unique perspective and analytical process.

RATIONALE

The Essay Plan emphasizes the student's unique thought process and analytical approach, which is difficult for AI tools to authentically replicate.

It can also be used with AI tools for initial brainstorming or drafting, but the final structure and argumentation requires critical thinking and researching to ensure that the content generated is factual and non-biased.

This method thus promotes authentic student work while still allowing for the integration of useful AI tools.
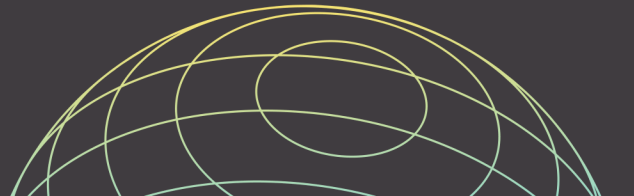
HOW DOES IT WORK?

Teachers provide a topic and guidelines, and students construct an essay plan that acts as a blueprint for their final essay.

The plan should include a clear thesis statement, main arguments supported by evidence, potential counter-arguments and their rebuttals, and a conclusion. Plans created in-class can allow teachers to give live feedback and guidance.

AI tools can be used to kick-start the brainstorming process or help draft portions of the work. Students should indicate which parts of their plan were assisted by AI and how (e.g., if it helped them identify a counter-argument they hadn't considered).

Students cannot rely entirely on these tools; they should critically analyse and adapt any AI-generated content to fit their unique arguments and perspectives. The focus here is on the thoughtful and discerning use of AI.

The Essay Plan helps develop critical thinking, analysis, and argumentation skills. Integrating AI tools modernizes the approach, allowing students to engage with new digital tools. Still, the emphasis should always be on student's own thought and effort.

Assessment criteria can include:

- Thesis Statement: The plan has a clear, concise, specific, and arguable thesis statement.
- Organization: The plan is well-organized and logical, clearly outlining the structure of arguments.
- Argument: The plan clearly outlines the main arguments to be made. Each argument relates back to the thesis statement.
- Evidence: The plan identifies key pieces of evidence that will be used to support each argument.
- Analysis: The plan indicates how evidence will be analyzed to support the arguments. It also identifies potential arguments and how to address them.
- Conclusion: The plan outlines how the conclusion will be drawn from the essay.
- Use of AI Tools: How and where any AI tools used in the planning process are clearly stated. The student explains how the tools contributed to the development of the plan.