What are Academics Looking For?

When you write an essay the marker will want to see that:

- The essay question has been answered
- There is reasoned argument and adequate supporting evidence
- The essay contains relevant information and has an appropriate focus
- The essay is well structured and has a logical organisation
- There is adequate analysis and commentary
- Sources have been referred to and cited in the appropriate way, and the essay has a reference list or bibliography
- The essay is well-written in a clear style suitable for the paper or course
- Academics also look for: Original ideas or approach
  Evidence of wide reading
  Neat presentation

Common Faults

- Missing the point of the question
- Failure to deal with part of a question, or limited coverage of an important issue
- Too much narrative at the expense of analysis
- Poor organisation or argument
- Insufficient supporting evidence
- Irrelevant material
- Conflicting ideas or evidence poorly explained
- Plagiarism
- Heavy dependence on quotes - the “cut and paste” essay
- Too much paraphrasing at the expense of individual commentary
- Other faults include: waffle, padding, generalisations, oversimplification, complex sentences that lose the reader, jargon, clichés.