

# Understanding essay types

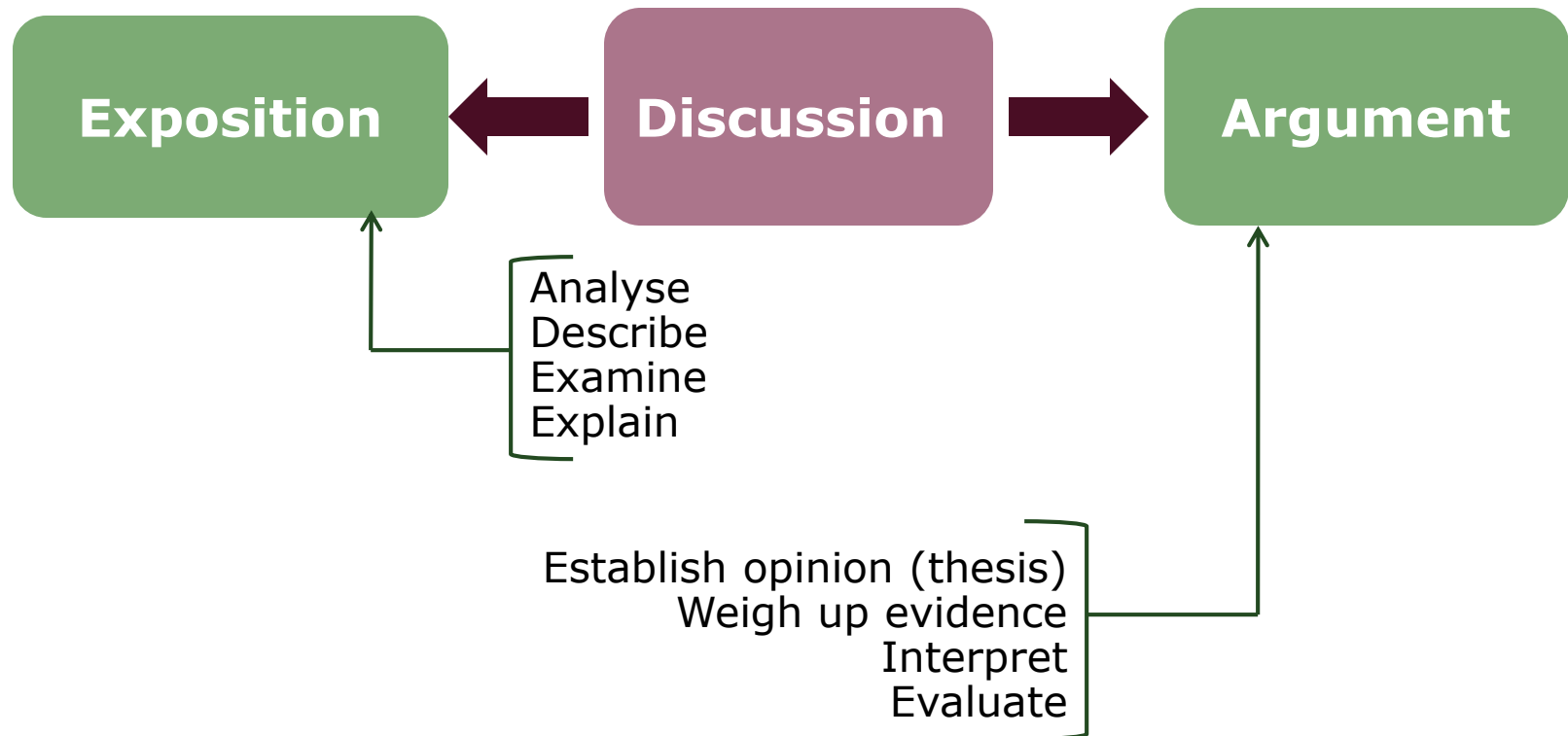
Discussion essays

# The nature of discussion

In academic writing, the term *discussion* usually relates to two types of activity:

- considering both sides of an issue or question
- considering the results of research and the implications of these

Discussion therefore has features of exposition and argument as shown in the following diagram:



# Discussion versus argument

- A discussion presents an argument in a more **balanced** way.
- The GOAL is to explore a debatable and contentious issue using **logical reasoning** and **convincing evidence**.
- It may not consistently argue *for* or *against* a point, but it will still have a thesis, which gives an indication of where the discussion is leaning.
- The thesis could be a tentative one prior to discussion. A more emphatic restatement of the thesis may appear in the conclusion.

# Discussion versus argument

## Example:

An essay question requiring an **argumentative** style may read like this:

*Should all public places be smoke-free?*

A **discussion essay** question is less contentious:

*Discuss the significance of smoke-free zones.*

# Description versus discussion

## Example:

### Description

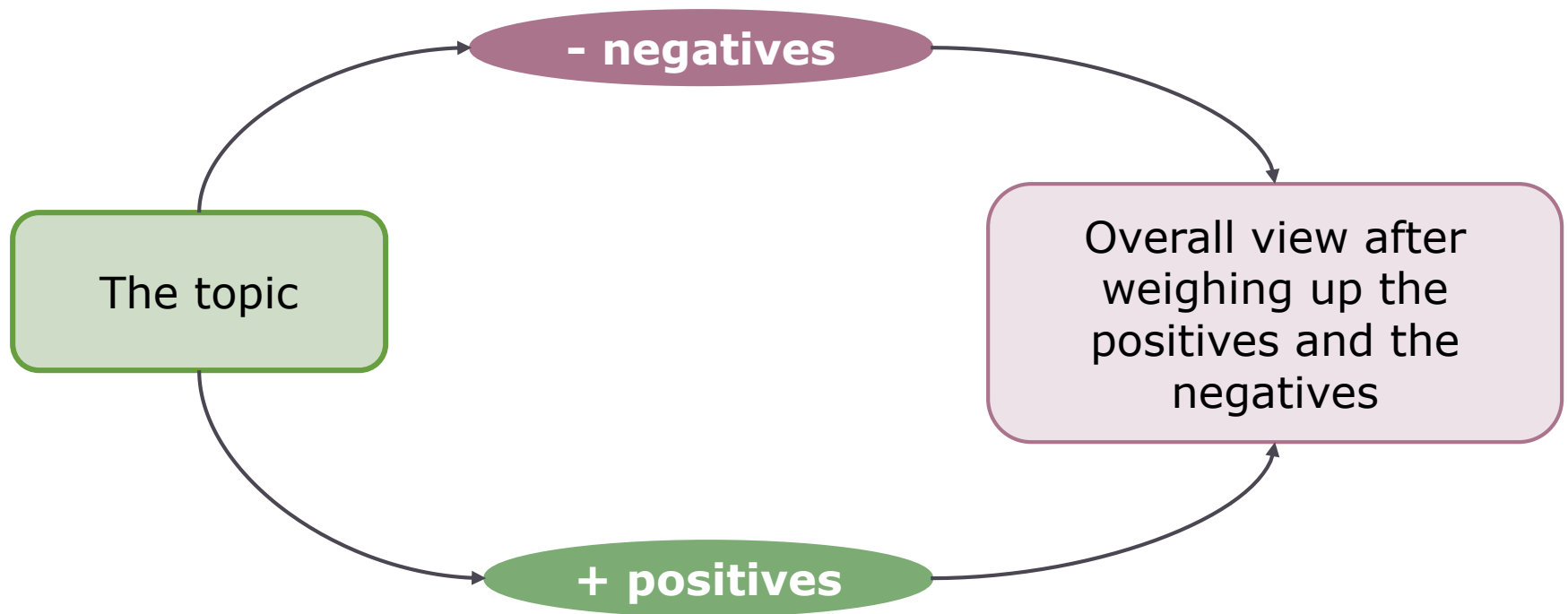
The four-note motif that begins Beethoven's fifth symphony consists of three quick G's and a long E-flat. It is a progression from the minor key to the major key.

### Discussion

(includes description, analysis and interpretation)

The four-note motif that begins Beethoven's fifth symphony, three quick G's and a long E-flat, is perhaps the most famous musical phrase in classical music history. In fact, this is the first symphony to trace in a systematic manner the progress from the minor to the major key.

# Shape of a discussion essay



**NOTE:** In comparison/contrast essays, the (+) could refer to the similarities, and the (-) the differences.

# Discussion essays: a strategy

- Decide on your **thesis** for the introduction and focus for your research.
- Identify the **key aspects** of significance and sort out contrasting views.
- Back up each aspect with **facts, analysis** and **discussion**.
- Decide on a **logical order** to present your material, using the conventional structure for academic essays.
- Weigh up all the evidence (including examples) and write a **decisive** and **authoritative conclusion** that sums up the issue.
- Remember to **use appropriate language** of discussion.

# Language of discussion

The language of discussion is the language of analysis, exploration, interpretation and valuation.

## Here are some useful expressions:

*There is some evidence that ...*

*Clearly, ...*

*There is no doubt that ...*

*Whether or not .... is unclear, but ...*

*However, this is not to say that ...*

*It has been said that ...*

*This clearly demonstrates that ...*

*It is difficult to conclude that ..., but the evidence suggests that ...*

*On the other hand, ...*

*Perhaps the most significant/obvious/dramatic/ impact of all is ...*

*X and Y are more similar than at first thought.*

*X provided the largest set of significant clusters of ...*

*It is interesting to note that in all seven cases of this study, ...*