Writing conclusions

The conclusion of your essay should bring your argument together, and should not introduce new analysis as such. However, it should be more than a simple summary of the points already made. The following questions may help you to clarify your ideas for the conclusion:

- What is the significance of your argument?

- What are its implications for our understanding of this text or its context? – or this historical event/period? – or this aspect of language use?, etc.

- Is the theme/idea you have explored related to any other key themes/ideas in the text/period/field of study? => do your findings have relevance for these too?

- Does your conclusion point to a reappraisal of any of the texts/periods/events/structures you have explored?

- Does it challenge received perceptions of this material/area of study?

Serious trouble with the writing of a conclusion often suggests one of the following:

- your argument is not well constructed
- you don’t actually have an argument!
- you need to spend more time thinking about the significance of your argument – you may find it hard to ‘step back’ from the detail
- you are struggling to put your material or your ideas into a wider context (more reading will usually help here)