Introductions

As it is the first thing your examiner will read, the introductory paragraph should demonstrate several things:

✓ You understand the question, its background context, and the complexities of its key words and/or phrases.
✓ You can clearly apply those terms to the subject matter of the essay (i.e. the chosen author, text, theory, timeframe, etc...).
✓ You can summarise your argument clearly and anticipate the main points of your answer.
✓ That your essay/argument is worth the read.

Introductions are often comprised of some combination of the following:

**Context:** Introduce your essay by outlining significant background or contextual information. This prepares the reader to fully understand the approach you take in answering the question.

**General Facts and Figures:** By drawing upon a striking fact/quotation that addresses the question quite broadly, you can convincingly illustrate your ‘take’ on the answer. Use facts/quotations that link directly to the key words and phrases. Being imaginative and adventurous with an opening quotation/fact can grab your reader’s attention. You should be sure, however, to keep it brief and relevant.

**Definitions:** Identify the key words in the question and define them. Use dictionaries and (peer-reviewed) encyclopaedias. This shows the examiner that you fully understand exactly what you are being asked to write about.

**Signposting:** Give your reader a concise summary of the major topics that will be covered in the body of your essay. Quite simply, devote one/two sentence(s) to each paragraph in your main answer. Mapping out your answer in this way will mark your intentions clearly from the outset – examiners don’t like surprises.

Tip: Just because your introduction occurs at the beginning of your essay, don’t feel that you need to complete it first. Redrafting it after the main body and conclusions are finished will help with the coherence and ‘flow’ of your answer.

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The student experience has been transformed due to the prevalence of social media, which can be defined as “websites and applications which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking” (OED, 2012). Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have changed the way that students interact with each other and share information, and also how they spend their time. Thus, it has been suggested that interaction through such sites has replaced ‘traditional’ modes of meeting and sharing (Gallagher, 2011). This change has been read as having both positive and negative effects on the student experience. On one hand, social media creates vibrant online communities and allows students with similar interests to communicate (Donaghy, 2011). Yet, social media can also be understood as contributing to alienation within the student body and fostering anti-social behaviour, including bullying (McGrath, 2010). This essay will consider the impact of social media on the student experience at Queen’s University, Belfast by reflecting on the results of a student-wide survey and current research on the area. Major issues that emerged from the survey include X, Y, Z....

In conclusion, the popularity of various social media sites has caused a decisive change in the student experience. By facilitating communication between students online, such sites have altered how students interact with one another and these changes have been diversely interpreted as both positive and negative. This essay has argued that students at Queen’s widely use such networks and consider them to have an overwhelmingly positive impact on their student experience. Although certain disadvantages have been illustrated, the sense of identity, involvement, and participation that such social media networks foster and encourage has, overall, brought students closer together. A more nuanced understanding of social media’s impact could be achieved by surveying past students who studied at Queen’s who did not have access to such media and/or by comparing Queen’s online social network culture to those in other universities.