An Example of an Academic Paragraph Structure

1) A number of problems associated with the traditional routines of handover practice have been identified. 2) Baldwin and McGinnis (1994) find that many handovers are unnecessarily lengthy which means that there is an unacceptable period of time during each shift when nurses are not available in the ward or unit. 3) More concerning are observations made by Wills (1994, p. 36) who states that an unprofessional approach has been noted among some nurses, with derogatory comments being made about patients or their families during handover. 4) Furthermore, this unprofessional behaviour has been compounded by the poor content and presentation of handover information. It appears that ‘nurses frequently report on their own activities over the shift rather than providing patient centred information’ (Professional Nurse, 1997, p. 637). 5) Thus, many serious problems have been identified in traditional handover practices which may reflect on the professional standing of nurses in this profession. These problems could be addressed with further staff professional development training, in which frequently occurring handover issues are discussed, and the potentially damaging impact on patient care made explicit. From here, strategies for best practice could be implemented.

1) Topic sentence – announces the theme of discussion for the paragraph (handover problems in this example)

2) Supporting evidence 1 – provides referenced evidence/example that relates to the theme

3) Supporting evidence 2 – provides further evidence of another aspect relating to the theme

4) Supporting evidence 3 – further evidence leading on from the previous citation / longer direct quote is indented and page number provided in reference

5) Discussion of evidence/concluding comments – the writer summarizes the evidence and suggests potential solutions to the problems outlined using cautious language. You might need to show how the evidence links to your Assignment Title Question or a Case study. Then add a sentence to signpost the reader to the next paragraph, if you haven’t already in your discussion.

(Note: a written paragraph in an essay would not contain numbering – this is just provided to clarify the structure for analysis)