

WelTec/Whitireia Writing Series

Assignment Words

When you are given an assignment, it can sometimes be difficult to work out exactly what you need to do. This is often because assignment briefs are written using academic words that are not common in everyday English. To successfully complete the assignment it's important that you understand exactly what these words mean so below you'll find some helpful definitions for some of the academic words most commonly used in assignment briefs.



Analyse

Break down a complex issue, topic or idea into its smaller parts. Explain the relationship between these parts.



Evaluate

Make a judgement that involves showing the advantages and limitations of a statement or issue.



Compare/Contrast

Show what is similar and what is different. Show the way in which they are the same and/or different and explain why if possible.



Examine

Investigate the topic closely. Identify the main issues and present your findings in depth. You may give your opinion if it is supported with evidence.



Criticise/Critique

Present a balanced view of a topic. Include positives, negatives and the extent to which views are supported by evidence. Do not simply provide a list of what is wrong or flawed.



Illustrate

Explain or make something clear using examples, pictures, diagrams, charts, graphs and drawings. This instruction is usually used with another instruction word.



Describe

Give a detailed account. Ask yourself who, what, when, where and why?



Justify

Provide reasons and evidence to support an opinion or conclusion.



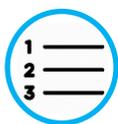
Discuss

Present the various points of view on the topic. Points-of-view should be explained and supported or challenged with evidence.



Outline

Identify and describe the main features. Details are not required.



Enumerate

Make a list and describe the appropriate features.



Summarise

Describe the key points or main facts in brief. No examples or details needed.



Still unsure?

Talk to your tutor or book an appointment with a Learning Advisor if you have any questions about your assignment brief.

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Your First Assignment



Not sure how to start your first assignment? Don't worry – many students feel unsure about how to approach their first assessment at tertiary level. Follow the simple steps below to get started!

Step 3: Do your research

Keep the task or research question in mind as you work through your assignment. Find suitable material. **Critically review** articles and other literature, Read, take notes and record references.

Step 2: Rough Plan

Make a rough plan that has two parts.

Part 1: Make a timeline to make sure all steps are completed on time: **analysing** the assignment, **research**, and **writing, editing** and **proofreading**.

Part 2: An outline of the assignment structure, which includes **introduction, body, conclusion** and the **reference list**.

Step 4: Detailed Plan

Review your rough plan and use it to make a **detailed plan** based on what you now know about the topic, and the assignment question.

Determine sections, and **section headings** if needed. Select **paragraph topics** and relevant **supporting evidence**. Check for **logical flow** of ideas.

Step 5: First Draft

Using your **outline as a guide**, begin to **write** your assignment.

Set up your document in the required format.

Write your draft and **refer to your plan** as you write.



Step 6: Write, revise, edit, repeat!

Edit and proof read your first draft,

Starting Point

Step 1: Analyse the assignment brief carefully

Understand the task by asking what, when, why, where, who and how.

Identify the key/task words or words which tell you what to do. For example: discuss, compare and contrast, evaluate or explain.

Interested in developing your writing?

Visit a Learning Advisor or pick up the other handouts in the **WelTec/Whitireia Writing Series**.

