

## Task Words

Here are some commonly used key words in assignment/examination questions and instructions:

| KEY WORDS                  | INTERPRETATION                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>account for</b>         | give reasons for, explain                                                                                                                           |
| <b>analyse</b>             | break an issue down into its component parts, then examine each part and describe the relationships between them                                    |
| <b>argue</b>               | make a case based on evidence. Develop a logical sequence of discussion, either presenting opposing views or supporting a particular attitude       |
| <b>assess</b>              | consider the value and significance of an issue, event or other matter, weighing up the positive and negative features                              |
| <b>compare</b>             | show similarities and differences between characteristics or qualities                                                                              |
| <b>contrast</b>            | emphasise the differences between characteristics or qualities                                                                                      |
| <b>critically evaluate</b> | make a judgment weighing up positive and negative features to arrive at an evaluation of the significance or usefulness of something                |
| <b>critically analyse</b>  | examine each part of an issue or argument, weighing up positive or negative features and the relationships between features or parts                |
| <b>criticise</b>           | analyse and make a judgment, weighing up positive and negative features. Base your judgment on criteria and give examples of how the criteria apply |
|                            | <i>(for more task words, please see overleaf)</i>                                                                                                   |

|                               |                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>critique</b>               | see <i>criticise</i>                                                                                             |
| <b>describe</b>               | tell about features, factors, qualities, aspects                                                                 |
| <b>define</b>                 | set out the meaning (of a term, word); describe (sometimes explain)                                              |
| <b>discuss</b>                | see account for; also to weigh up and compare several views on an issue, develop a thesis, attitude or viewpoint |
| <b>enumerate</b>              | specify and list main features                                                                                   |
| <b>evaluate</b>               | consider various arguments to reach a judgment on significance or value                                          |
| <b>explain</b>                | give reasons for, clarify cause and effect; reason and result                                                    |
| <b>indicate</b>               | point out and list main features or factors                                                                      |
| <b>identify</b>               | select and list main features or factors                                                                         |
| <b>interpret</b>              | explain what is meant and relate this to the topic                                                               |
| <b>illustrate</b>             | give examples; explain                                                                                           |
| <b>justify</b>                | give reasons for a course of action, thesis or attitude                                                          |
| <b>outline</b>                | describe the main points                                                                                         |
| <b>prove</b>                  | demonstrate by logical argument                                                                                  |
| <b>(give a) rationale for</b> | give reasons, explain why                                                                                        |
| <b>review</b>                 | provide an overview; also to make a critical analysis                                                            |
| <b>summarise</b>              | give a concise description                                                                                       |

Adapted from the following source:

Morley-Warner, T. 2009, *Academic writing is... A guide to writing in a university context*, Association for Academic Language and Learning, Sydney, p. 116.

