Unpacking an assignment question + Planning for an assignment
Discussion

• When in doubt, do you clarify the assignment task with your lecturer/tutor? If not, why not?
• What types of assignments are you doing this semester?
• Do you refer to the assessment/marking criteria? If not, why not?
• How soon do you start your assignments? Are you an early starter, or you are a procrastinator?
• In your opinion/experience, how much time is needed to prepare for an assignment from start to finish?
Markers feedback

This is a well-written piece but it does not address the question that was set – it is full of lots of interesting pieces of information but much of it is not relevant to the topic.

- Serious lack of critical analysis. Much too descriptive in 95% of the cases.
- Very few students managed to get referencing correct.
- No use of statistics or facts.
- Claims without proof.
- Little use of academic literature.
- Essays lack a clear structure.
Objectives

• To be able to unpack an assignment question in order to determine the assignment requirements
• To be aware of other essential assignment requirements
• To develop a systematic approach when planning for an assignment
Unpacking an assignment question

- content words
- limiting words
- instruction words
Example

In the last 20 years, rates of divorce have risen significantly in Western countries. Critically analyse some of the different explanations given for this phenomenon. In your discussion, you should consider what implications these explanations might have for social policy.

Content words:
significant increase in rates of divorce, explanations, implications for social policy

Limiting words:
in the last 20 years, Western countries

Instruction words:
critically analyse, discuss
Practice

1. Describe the main factors contributing to depression amongst adolescent middle-class females. Evaluate three common approaches to this condition, then explain and justify an alternative technique.

2. Discuss the following statement:
   Practices in leadership contribute to managing communication in the post-bureaucratic era.

3. Choose one of the articles provided in UTSOnline under Assessment 1. Identify and analyse the key issues in the article, relate these issues to contemporary Indigenous Health. The discussion should include relevant literature and statistics to support the analysis.
Instruction words activity

Discuss

Explain

Critically analyse

Analyse

Justify

Evaluate
Assignment requirements

• Assignment type
• Word limit (± 10%)
• Assessment (or marking) criteria
• References – number, types and currency
• Presentation (formatting and layout)
• Submission details
• Others?
Assignment types

• Essays
• Reports
• Reflective journals
• Case studies
• Critical reviews
• Literature reviews
• Others?
Assessment criteria

Discuss how the issues associated with poverty might be understood as a wicked problem.

In preparing your response, you should:

• justify the statements you are making by referring to sources of information you have independently researched;
• provide examples to support your points;
• refer to at least five sources from valid and reputable published literature;
• present your references using the Harvard system of referencing;
• limit your response to 500 words – not including references (give or take 10%). The ability to present your point of view within a prescribed number of words is an important skill which will be assessed in this task; and,
• edit your work prior to submitting it to ensure it is written with accurate grammatical structure, spelling and punctuation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARKING CRITERIA</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>BELOW EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>MEETS EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identifies the characteristics of a wicked problem</td>
<td>3/15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Provides details of some or all of the characteristics with reference to supporting evidence</td>
<td>Characteristics are comprehensive and illustrated with supporting examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Relates the wicked problem to business issues and practice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited application to business issues and practice</td>
<td>Extensive analysis of the concept in relation to business issues and practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Uses a critical analytical approach</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>No / little evidence of a critical or analytical approach</td>
<td>Yes, to some extent</td>
<td>Yes, to a great extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Coherent format and structure; communicative effectiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Incoherent; paragraphs non-existent</td>
<td>Yes, the writing is mostly logically sequenced</td>
<td>The essay is very well structured, coherent, and easy to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Usage (literacy)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Writing difficult to follow</td>
<td>Writing can be followed throughout.</td>
<td>Minimal errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Uses a variety of clear and concise expression of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use of supporting material &amp; Harvard UTS referencing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Little, inaccurate, or no citation</td>
<td>Material is identified and supported; citation is mostly accurate and appropriate; some omissions or uncited material</td>
<td>Consistent and accurate citation used throughout as necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Planning

Two levels of planning:

• Planning for your assignment, from start to finish
  • The writing process
  • Use the Library’s Assignment Survival Kit if necessary
    http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/assignment-survival-kit

• Planning for the structure of your assignment, and what to include in your assignment
  • Refer to the Writing in academic style workshop PPT for details
  • Refer to the Reading and note-making strategies workshop PPT for details
  • Refer to the HELPS planning sheet
Writing process

From University of Wollongong Unilearning http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/essay/1b.html
General structure

Introduction
• background information/context
• purpose/thesis
• outline

Body paragraph (how many?)
• Topic sentence
• Supporting sentences
• Concluding sentence

Conclusion
• Restate purpose/thesis
• Summarise arguments
• Fulfilment of purpose/thesis

References

NB: Use the word count to help determine the number of words per section/paragraph
Planning activity

In the last 20 years, rates of divorce have risen significantly in Western countries. Critically analyse some of the different explanations given for this phenomenon. In your discussion, you should consider what implications these explanations might have for social policy.

Use the HELPS planning sheet and come up with a preliminary plan and structure to address this essay question. The word limit is 2000 words.

• Roughly, how many words would you have in the introduction, body and conclusion?
• What would you include in the introduction?
• Assuming that you have come across more than 10 different explanations. What would you do and how would you decide what to include (in the body of the essay)?
• How would you conclude the essay?
HELPS services and programs:

- Daily workshops
- Assignment advice
  - 15-min drop-in consultation
  - 40-min one-to-one consultation by referral
- WriteNow! Writing support sessions
- Conversations@UTS
- HELPS Volunteers and Mentors
- Self-help resources
- Holiday intensive workshops
Contact us

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W: http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/about-helps