



## **Study Skills Induction for New Learners:**

# **2. Planning and Writing Assignments**

**Please note: these workshops are interactive!**

Message the lecturer if you are unable to unmute your microphone during the session.

**Session will start at: 00:00**

## Planning and Writing Assignments: Workshop Content

Label the directive, subject matter and limiting words in a sample assignment question

Apply six important academic conventions to improve academic style

Explain the common features of critical writing

**By the end of the lesson you will be able to:**

Plan and write assignments according to academic conventions to maximise your grade

# Understanding an Assignment brief

What is the purpose of assignments in your programme?



To enable you to show:

- Your **application** of **key module concepts** to **well-chosen examples** of **workplace practice**.
- Your **breadth** and **depth** of **independent research**.
- Your **ability** to **articulate next steps**, **continuing professional development** and **recommend improvements**.

# Planning and Writing Assignments

Task

What do you see as the biggest challenge?

- A) Writing 2,500 – 3,000 words.
- B) Splitting an assignment into 2 or 3 shorter tasks.
- C) Planning/writing an academic report.
- D) Planning/writing a critical analysis of a current workplace project.
- E) Writing using the correct type of language (Academic style).
- F) Structuring an academic paragraph.

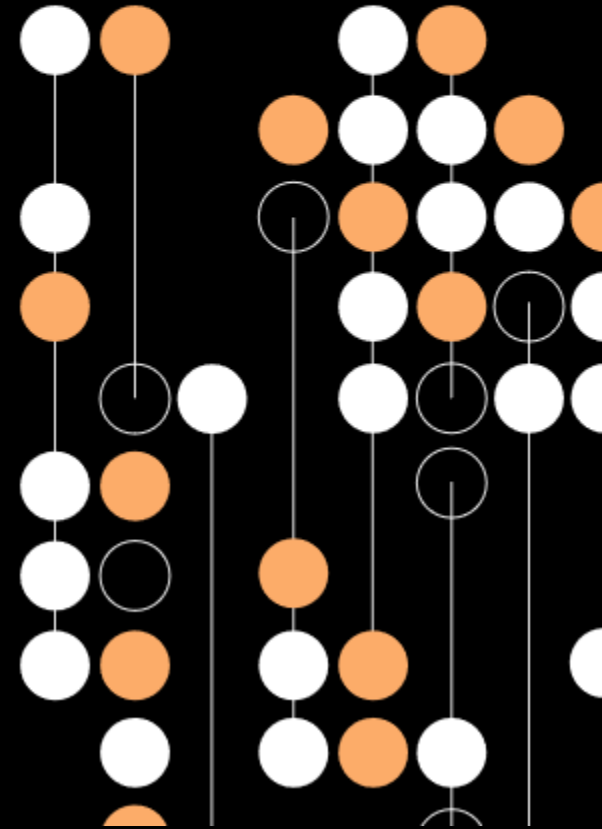
# Planning and Writing Assignments

In today's session we will look at....

- 1) Types of assignment questions
- 2) An example Task Description
- 3) How to Plan an Assignment
- 4) An Introduction to Academic Style
- 5) An Introduction to Structuring paragraphs



# 1) Types of Assignment Questions



## Most Common Types of Assignment Questions

The type of assignment question you will be tasked with varies across assignments. Below are a list of possible assignment types:

- **Report**
- Literature Review
- Rich Picture
- Proposal
- Essay
- Reflection
- Presentation
- Portfolio
- Academic Poster
- Business Case

A **report** is the most common type of assignment.  
The remainder of this session will focus on **reports** specifically.

## Sample Assignment Question

Note the components and example structure of a Task Description below:

Task 1	<b>Digital Communication (40 marks)</b> Critically analyse your organisation's use of a chosen communications technology to achieve strategic goals.
Task 2	<b>Digital Strategy (40 marks)</b> Propose and justify recommendations for improving your organisation's current digital strategy. Consider risks and how to mitigate them.
Task 3	<b>Reflection (20 marks)</b> Critically reflect on the importance of digital communication for your current role and development on this apprenticeship pathway.

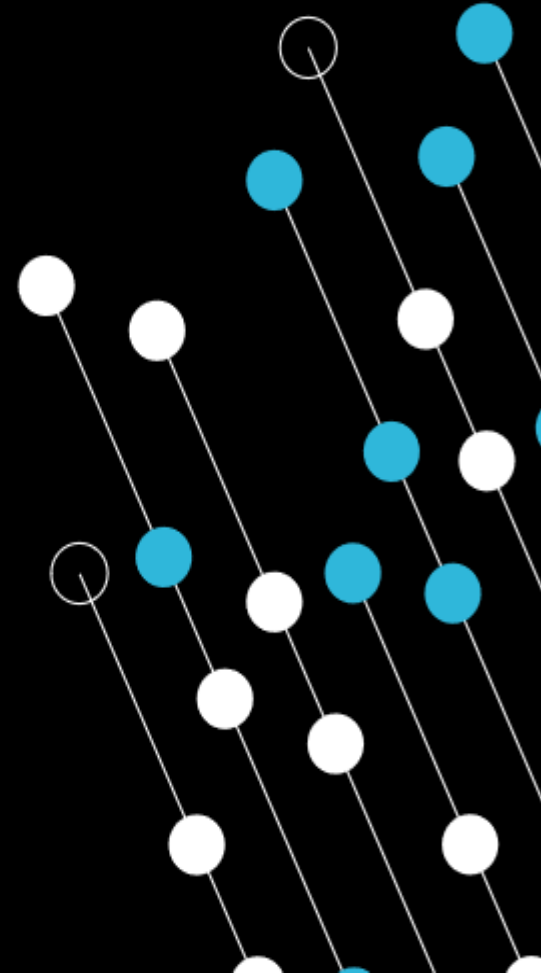
Assignment brief structures vary across courses and levels

You may or may not be provided with the wordcount per task

We will explore **Task 1** in more detail throughout this session.



## 2) Task Description





## Understanding the Task Description

Begin by breaking down the task description, highlighting the **directive**, **subject matter** and **limiting words**.

### Directive words

Tell you precisely what to do. Examples include **discuss**, **analyse** and **critically evaluate**.

### Subject matter words

Describe **what** you should be writing about.

### Limiting words

Help **narrow the focus** of your answer.

## Sample Assignment Question

**Task**

Identify the **directive**, **subject matter** and **limiting** words in the Task Description.

Task 1	<b>Digital Communication (40 marks)</b> Critically analyse your organisation's use of a chosen communications technology to achieve strategic goals.
Task 2	<b>Digital Strategy (40 marks)</b> Propose and justify recommendations for improving your organisation's current digital strategy. Consider risks and how to mitigate them.
Task 3	<b>Reflection (20 marks)</b> Critically reflect on the importance of digital communication for your current role and development on this apprenticeship pathway.

# Directive, Subject matter and Limiting words



Task 1	<b>Digital Communication (40 marks)</b> Critically analyse your organisation's use of a chosen communications technology to achieve strategic goals.
Task 2	<b>Digital Strategy (40 marks)</b> Propose and justify recommendations for improving your organisation's current digital strategy. Consider risks and how to mitigate them.
Task 3	<b>Reflection (20 marks)</b> Critically reflect on the importance of digital communication for your current role and development on this apprenticeship pathway.

We will explore **Task 1** in more detail throughout this session.

# Understanding the Task Description



Action verb	Meaning
Critically analyse	Examine methodically with reference to theory
Define	Present a precise meaning
Discuss	Consider different sides of an issue
Evaluate	Decide on the value of a theory or argument by assessing its relevance, reliability and significance
Justify	Provide persuasive reasons for your stance, grounded in academic evidence
Outline	Describe the main features (omitting details)

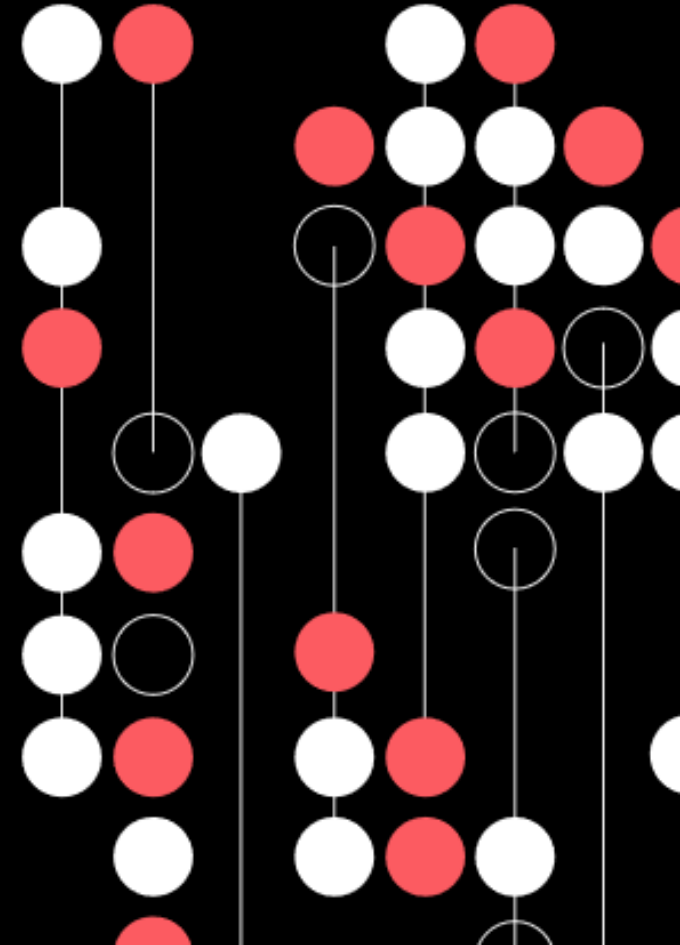
## Elements of an Assignment Brief

In addition to the assignment question (or 'Task description'), assignment briefs also contain:

- **Learning outcomes** – *which module outcomes are specifically being assessed in the assignment.*
- **Submission criteria** – *when and how to submit the assignment.*
- **Assessment rubric** – *what you need to do to get a good score.*

The **most important aspect** of an assignment brief is the **Task description**, and it is this to which you should continually refer when writing!

### 3) Planning a Report



## Planning a Report

When planning your report, use your assignment brief to map out the **headings** and **subheadings** and provide yourself with a **wordcount** for each section.

<b>1.0 (Heading 1)</b> _____ (Word Count: ____ / To be Completed by: ____)		
<b>1.1 (Subheading 1)</b> _____ Wordcount ____	<b>1.2 (Subheading 2)</b> _____ Wordcount ____	<b>1.3 (Subheading 3)</b> _____ Wordcount ____

**TIP!**

During the planning stage your headings, subheadings and word count do not have to be perfect!



## Sample Assignment Question

Consider this assignment brief from earlier (3,000 word report)

		Report Criteria
Task 1	<b>Digital Communication</b> Critically analyse your organisation's use of a chosen communications technology to achieve strategic goals. (40 marks)	<b>Wordcount: 3000</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Part 1= 40 marks</b> (1,200 words)</li><li>• <b>Part 2= 40 marks</b> (1,200 words)</li><li>• <b>Part 3= 20 marks</b> (600 words)</li></ul>
Task 2	<b>Digital Strategy</b> Propose and justify recommendations for improving your organisation's current digital strategy. Consider risks and how to mitigate them. (40 marks)	
Task 3	<b>Reflection</b> Critically reflect on the importance of digital communication for your current role and development on this apprenticeship pathway. (20 marks)	



# Planning a Report

<b>1.0 (Heading 1) _____</b> <b>1,200 words</b> / To be Completed by: _____		
<b>1.1 (Subheading 1) _____</b> Wordcount <b>400 words</b>	<b>1.2 (Subheading 2) _____</b> Wordcount <b>400 words</b>	<b>1.3 (Subheading 3) _____</b> Wordcount <b>400 words</b>
<b>2.0 (Heading 2) _____</b> <b>1,200 words</b> / To be Completed by: _____		
<b>2.1 (Subheading 1) _____</b> Wordcount <b>600 words</b>	<b>2.2 (Subheading 2) _____</b> Wordcount <b>600 words</b>	NA
<b>3.0 (Heading 3) _____</b> <b>600 words</b> / To be Completed by: _____		
<b>3.1 (Subheading 1) _____</b> Wordcount <b>300 words</b>	<b>3.2 (Subheading 2) _____</b> Wordcount <b>300 words</b>	NA

## Report Criteria

**Wordcount: 3000**

- **Part 1= 40 marks**  
(1,200 words)
- **Part 2= 40 marks**  
(1,200 words)
- **Part 3= 20 marks**  
(600 words)

## Planning stage example

As part of your plan, you may want to cover areas such as:

- What you want to discuss
- What you already know
- Research/ theory to incorporate
- Relevant workplace examples
- Areas for further research

### 1.0 - Digital Communications

(Word Count: 1,200 / To be Completed by: 2<sup>nd</sup> January)

#### 1.1 Digital communication in company X (<400 words)

- > Table with communication modes included/ frequency of use
- > Discuss relevance of table/ link to assignment question.
- > Upcoming technology/ AI

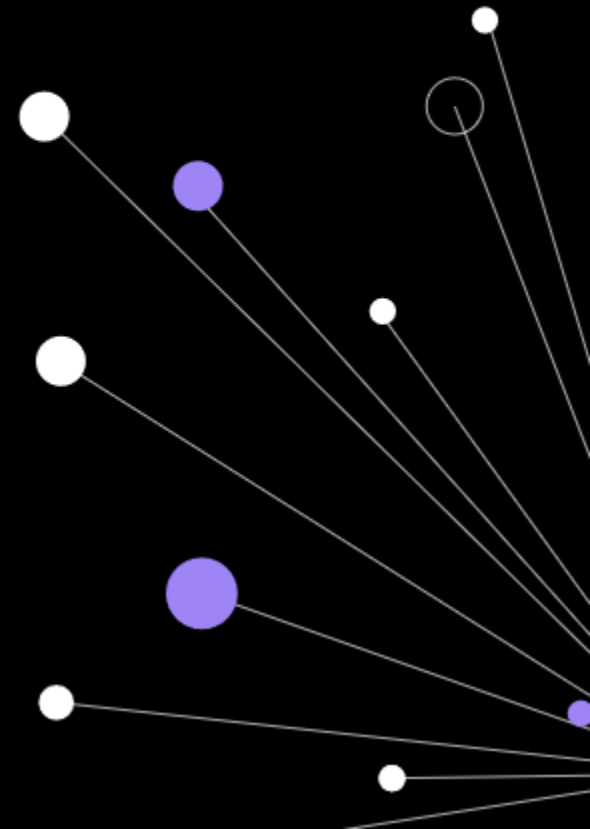
#### 1.2 Analysis of 'Chosen technology Y' (400 words)

- > Examine methodically with reference to theory
- > Connection index (further research)
- > UX stats= 85% (appendix)

#### 1.3 'Achieving strategic goals with technology Y' (400 words)

- > Discuss +/-, extent of limitations + authors
- > Wider theory about strategic goals/ apply to organisation X

## 4) Academic Style



The following conventions are followed to produce successful university assignments and scholarly publications:

1

Formality

4

Concision



2

Precision

5

Caution

3

Objectivity

6

Structure

## Academic Style

Task

How could you improve this academic paragraph?

Company X uses a mix of ways to communicate, depending on a few things: the situation, individual or department. So it's impossible to predict how a given situation will be dealt with.

## Academic Style



How could you improve this academic paragraph?

Company X uses a mix of ways to communicate, depending on a few things: the situation, individual or department. So it's impossible to predict how a given situation will be dealt with.

Formal	No contraction	Hedging language	Specific
'range of' 'methods' 'factors' 'Therefore'	'it is'	'can be difficult to predict'	'three'

## Academic Style

### Task

Note the differences:

A

Company X uses a mix of ways to communicate, depending on a few things: the situation, individual or department. So it's impossible to predict how a given situation will be dealt with.

B

In Company X, a range of digital communication methods are deployed. The method chosen may depend on considerations such as the situation, departmental culture or the individual manager's preference. Consequently, there is little uniformity in approach.



## Academic Style - Summary

### Words and expressions:

More formal, technical and specialist with use of hedging language

### When doing reading:

Consider why a given text is easier or more difficult to understand.

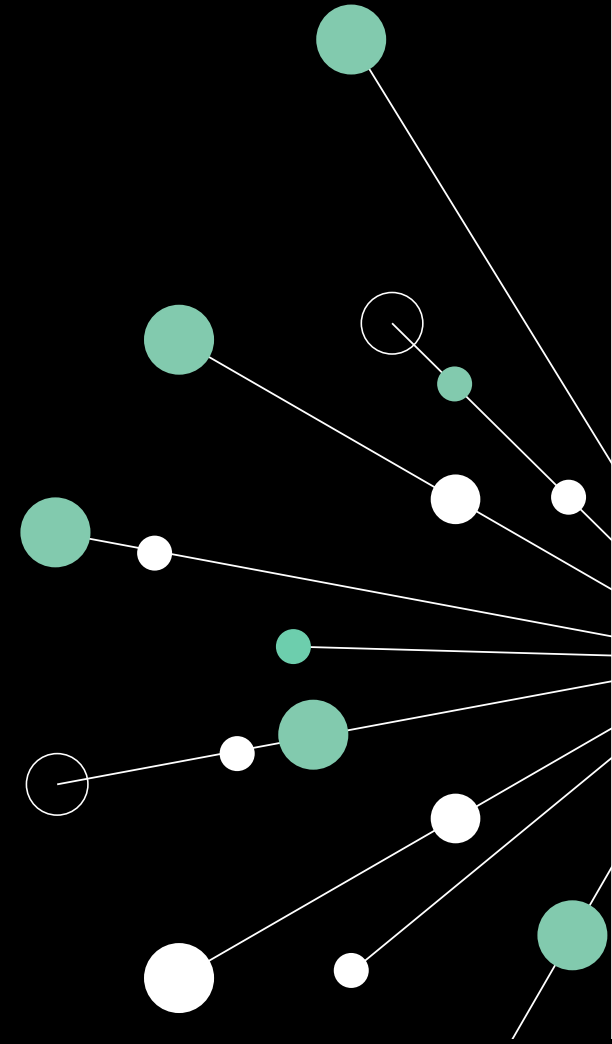
### Structure:

- Less conversational.
  - More precise
- Ideas drawn from evidence.

### Timing:

- Allow time to review your work before submission
- Is the meaning clear?
  - Is the style appropriate?

## 5) Paragraph Structure (TEEEL)





# Organising Critical Paragraphs with 'TEEEL'

**Topic, Expand, Evidence, Explanation, Link (TEEEL)**

**Topic** – Clearly and succinctly tell the reader what the paragraph will be about.

**Expand** – Make sure your reader understands the main idea by defining industry terms and / or relating it back to your experiences in the workplace.

**Evidence** – Incorporate some evidence to back up your main idea. This evidence should be a paraphrase supported by a reference to a scholarly resource. You should consider the strengths and limitations of the evidence, demonstrating its value, coherence, or relevance.

**Explanation** – How does the evidence support or develop your argument? You should also discuss the extent to which its findings apply to your organisation.

**Link** – Conclude your paragraph by either linking back to your main idea or linking forward to the next paragraph. You may also propose a recommendation.



## An example 'TEEEL' paragraph

**Topic, Expand, Evidence, Explanation, Link (TEEEL)**

Digital communication has enhanced the capacity of people to connect across cultures but replicating the human connection felt in physical interactions remains an industry-wide challenge (Smith, 2016). The stated aim of Organisation x's 'Connection Index' is therefore to "grow social connectivity by improving the quality of online interactions" (Organisation x, 2023). Although Harrison (2017) argues that such forms of communication often fail to produce meaningful relationships, he neglects to consider the possibility of organisation-driven interventions like the Connection Index utilising big data and artificial intelligence (AI) to connect people with similar interests from around the world. In the past 18 months 85% of users participating in the Connection Index trial reported a more fulfilling digital experience with an increased number of "strong connections" (Appendix A), which appears to challenge Markson's (2018) contention that online communication tends not to facilitate profound interpersonal experiences. This trend appears likely to continue as the big data and AI technologies underpinning the Connection Index continue to evolve.

## Descriptive and Critical Writing

### Task

In each of the 3 pairs below, which is an example of **Critical** Writing?

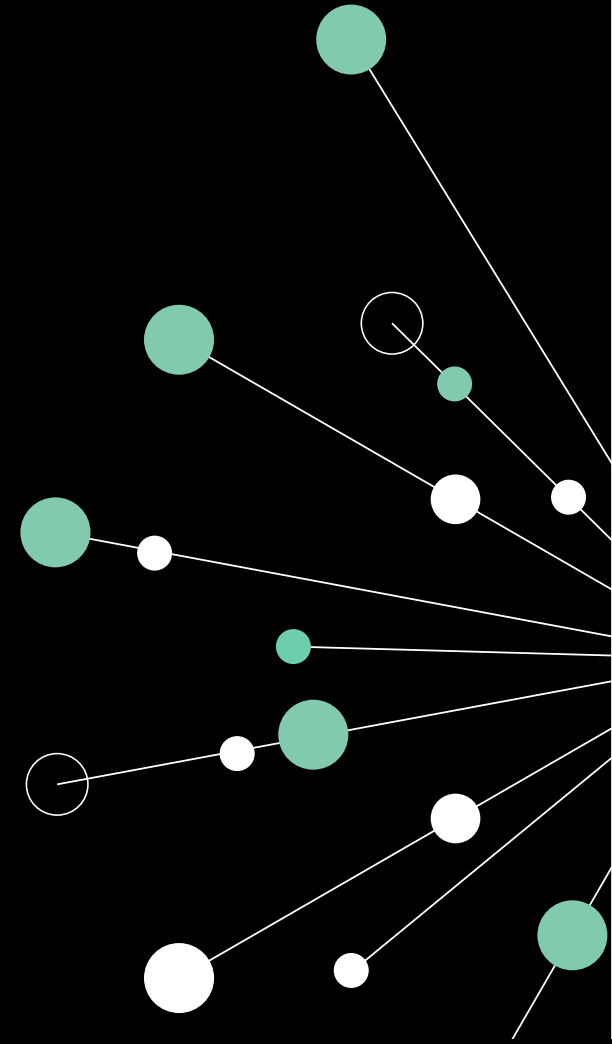
B	A) States what happened B) Identifies the significance
A	A) Evaluates strengths and limitations of theory in practice B) Explains what a theory says or how something works
B	A) Provides information, facts, or figures on a particular topic B) Draws conclusions, proposes recommendations or solutions

# Descriptive Writing and Critical Writing



Descriptive Writing	Critical Writing
States what happened	Identifies the significance
Explains what a theory says or how something works	Evaluates its strengths and limitations in practice
Notes the methods used and how the research was undertaken	Demonstrates the relevance of links between pieces of information
Lists details or describes the order in which things happened	Provides reasons for selecting each option, exploring alternative approaches
Presents opinions	Argues a case according to evidence, recognising the potential limitations of existing research
Provides information, facts, or figures on a particular topic	Draws conclusions, proposes recommendations or solutions

# Review



## Planning and Writing Assignments - Review



Your assignments will ***all*** be academic reports.



## Planning and Writing Assignments - Review



The wordcount for your assignment sections will ***always*** be provided.

## Planning and Writing Assignments - Review



After the planning stage, your headings, subheadings and word count can change!

## Planning and Writing Assignments - Review



You should use contractions to reduce your word count.

## Onboarding Feedback

Thank you for attending this ACE Workshop.  
We would be grateful if you could take 2 minutes to provide **feedback** based on your onboarding experience.

## Do you require further academic support?

Look on the  
ACE Page for  
resources

Check out our  
upcoming  
workshops

Book a 1-2-1  
tutorial



**Any questions?**