

# Structuring an assignment

# 1. Purpose

- To help students develop the ability to submit written assignments that consistently meet the requirements of particular disciplines.
- It outlines the conventions students are expected to know in order to successfully complete their assignments.
- It offers guidance on how to apply the correct technical qualities to assignments.

## 2. Points to consider when writing an assignment

Start early to avoid rushing.

### 2.1 Plan

Schedule your work on a particular assignment over a specific period, such as three weeks.

Stick to the schedule.

2.2 Consult the prescribed study material- Tutorial letter 101, appropriate study guide and other relevant sources.

2.3 Study the instructions of the assignment and the guidelines- look at the type of an assignment

- Short questions
- Multiple choice questions
- Essay-type assignment

# 2. Point to consider...

2.5 Draft an outline or structure of your assignment

2.6 The length of the assignment

- Limit the length of your assignments as indicated in the instruction of each assignment.

2.7 Mark allocation

2.8 Marking guidelines- content and technical quality

# 3. Analyse the question

- ❖ What are you expected to do?
  - The following are examples of action words that are usually found in assignments and the kind of answers that could be given.
  - Based on this list, determine the action words that are used in the assignment on which you are currently working.
- ❖ Know the meaning of action words such as:
  - **Discuss**- Examine various aspects of a topic, a critical approach should be followed.
  - **Analyse** -Divide into sections or elements and discuss in full.
  - **Compare** -Identify the similarities or differences between facts, or examine the differences between viewpoints, and so forth.

# 3. Action words

- **Contrast** - Point out the differences between certain set-off objects or characteristics.
- **Criticise** - Point out the good and bad characteristics, and give your own opinion after taking all the facts, arguments or assumptions into account.
- **Define or give the definition** -Give a short and concise description of the subject or topic.
- **Compare** -Identify the similarities or differences between facts, or examine the differences between ideas, facts,

# 3. Action words

- **Distinguish** - Note the differences that distinguish two topics from one another.
- **Evaluate** - Give an informed opinion, as measured against certain standards, on a topic.
- **Examine** - Examine and critically discuss a topic in terms of definite criteria or guidelines.
- **Explain** - Explain and clarify to ensure that the reader clearly understands your arguments. Make use of illustrations, descriptions or simple but logical explanations.
- **Give** - Give only the facts without any discussion.
- **Give an outline** - Present the data in a brief, logical and systematic manner.
- **Identify** - Name the most important characteristics of a topic

# 4. Technical requirements

An academic should include the following:

- 4.1 A declaration
- 4.2 Title page
- 4.3 Table of contents
- 4.4 Numbering of pages
- 4.5 Text
- 4.6 List of references
- 4.7 Annexures



# 4.1 Declaration

- It is an affidavit signed by yourself and a witness to prove that the work belongs to you .
- This declaration must be placed in the **front** of your assignment or portfolio
- It is **not** necessary to include this declaration when you submit answers to multiple-choice questions on a mark-reading sheet.

# 4.1 A sample of declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this is my own and personal work, except where the work(s) or publications of others have been acknowledged by means of reference techniques.

I have read and understood Tutorial Letter CMNALLE/301 regarding technical and presentation requirements, referencing techniques and plagiarism.

Your name

Your student number

Date

A witness' name

## 4.2 The title page

Some disciplines require students to include the title pages. If they do, include the following:

- The title of the assignment
- Name and student number of the candidate
- Module name
- Unique number
- Date on which the assignment must be submitted
- Name of the lecturer (if necessary)

## 4.3 Table of contents

- The purpose of a table of contents is provide a systematic overview of the assignment, and to link headings and subheading to specific page numbers for easy reference
- The numbering of headings and subheadings in the table of contents must agree with the headings and subheadings in the text.
- The headings and subheadings must be numbered but there must not be full stops after the numbers.
- It must include an introduction and a conclusion
- A list of references or bibliographies must be included

# 4.4 Numbering of pages

- All the pages of an assignment must be numbered.
- Pages are numbered at the top or at the bottom, either in the middle or on the side of the page and no punctuation marks are used.

# 4.5 Text

- The text of an assignment comprises both the *content* and *form* components.
- During the planning and writing of an assignment both must receive continuous attention.

# 4.5.1 The content

An essay-type assignment starts with an introduction and ends with a conclusion

- Introduction

Explains the aims of the assignment and the intended course of the study.

- Body

Comprises the logical and reasoned development of ideas, themes and arguments concerning the theme of an assignment

The key concepts are identified, defined and connected. This is in accordance with the aim set out in the introduction

- Conclusion

The broad topic is summarised in the form of conclusions. The summary should contain no new information

# 4.5.2 The form of an assignment

- The broad framework is composed of divisions with appropriate headings and suitable subheadings which are numbered. Questions to the assignment must not be reproduced. They must be written as phrases
- The headings and subheadings must correspond with those in the table of contents
- Start with 1., followed by 1.1, and, if further subdivisions are made, 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 . In similar fashion the next division and its subdivisions are numbered



# 4.5.2 The form of an assignment

- If you type the assignment, use the Arial font, double or 1.5 spacing
- Your written work (or typewritten work or print-out) is dark enough to be legible (use only one side of the page.)
- Leave a 5 cm margin on the right-hand side of each page for the lecturer's comments

# 4.5.2 The form of an assignment

- An assignment must exhibit a continuous train of thought and should not consist of loose, unconnected fragments.
- Keep to the subject
- Avoid tedious explanations, repetitions and unnecessary information
- Do not copy the study material without showing any level of interpretation or insight
- Language must be neat and correct. Pay attention to the construction of sentences, punctuation and paragraphing.
- The register of the assignment must be formal
- Avoid personal ways of expressing yourself

# Avoid informal language

- Contractions such as won't
- Abbreviations such as tv
- Approved abbreviations (such as "e.g.", or "i.e.", or "etc.") should ideally only be used between brackets and **must be written out in full**, as "for example", or "that is", or "et cetera" **in the text**.
- However, if you are referring to organisations that are better known by their abbreviations or acronyms, then the convention is to write out the name of the organisation in full the first time that you refer to it, followed by the acronym in brackets, after which you may continue to use the acronym.

# 4.6 List of references

The list of sources must include:

- Different sources representing different points of view (references).
- Two types of references (citations) must be used, namely:  
**In-text references**, which may be in sentences or paragraphs

Example: Du Toit (2019:11) argues that.....

In a **list of references** at the end of an assignment.

Example: Du Toit . 2019. *Integrated organisational communication*. Cape Town: Juta.

# Labelling figures, illustrations and tables

- Your assignment may require you to want to insert labelling figures, illustrations and tables
- Use these sparingly and only when it is warranted (i.e. relevant to your discussion) and make sure that they are labelled correctly.

# 4.7 Annexures

- Some assignments may require you to attach some documents to your assignment and label them as annexures. Examples are permission letters from companies observed or diaries.

# Conclusion

- The presentation covered all the aspect that are important and will guide you when structuring your assignments.
- The prescribed study material , the study guide and tutorial letters of the module you are registered for provide instructions on assignment writing. Read them thoroughly.
- Call your lecturer or module coordinator for any concerns or queries.

**“Enjoy your studies”**