

Assessment Terms

Intro: The requirements of an assignment can be subtly different depending upon what terms are used in the assignment brief. The following table explains how common assessment terms link with the approach needed in each case.

Account for:

Give reasons for; explain why something happens.

Analyse:

Examine in very close detail; identify important points and chief features.

Compare:

Show how two or more things are similar. Indicate the relevance or consequences of these similarities.

Contrast:

Set two or more arguments in opposition to draw out differences. Give reasons why one may be preferable.

Create:

Produce (something new, such as a work of art, a process, or a piece of writing) by using your skills and imagination.

Critically evaluate:

Weigh arguments for and against something, assessing the strength of the evidence on both sides.

Design:

Outline, sketch or plan the form and / or structure of a something, such as a work of art, a project or process.

Describe:

Give the main characteristics or features of something, or outline the main events.

Discuss:

Write about the most important aspects of the topic in question; give arguments for and against a topic.

Distinguish:

Bring out the differences between two items or topics.

Elaborate:

Discuss in detail with reasons and examples.

Evaluate:

Assess the importance or usefulness of something, using evidence. Show possible cases for both and against.

Examine:

Put the subject 'under the microscope', looking at it in detail. If appropriate, 'critically evaluate' it as well.

Explain:

Make clear why something happens, or why something is the way it is.

Interpret:

Give the meaning and relevance of data or other material presented.

Illustrate:

Make something clear and explicit, giving examples or evidence.

Justify:

Give evidence that supports an argument; show why conclusions were made, consider objections that others may make.

Narrate:

Concentrate on saying what happened, in the sequence that it happened.

Outline:

Give only the main points, showing the main structure

Present:

Deliver or perform something, such as a seminar, talk, or part in a play.

Reflect on:

Consider or think carefully about (could be from a subjective point of view or objective one).

Report:

Give an account of a particular matter; a spoken or written account of something that one has observed, heard, done, or investigated.

Summarise:

Draw out the main points only, omitting details or examples.

To what extent:

Consider how far something contributes to a final outcome.

Trace:

Follow the order of different stages in an event or process.