Analysing your assignment

What type of assignment is it?

Your lecturer should have provided information about the type (genre) and objectives for a task. Please make sure you understand the genre of assignment as well as the objectives and requirements for the assignment. Some of the most common examples of genres include: essay, report, and presentation.

You can find information about assignments in the course guide for your course as well as on Blackboard. Please make sure you talk with your lecturer if you are unsure of the genre of the assignment or its objectives and requirements.

How do you plan to use the information?

Before searching for suitable information, you should understand the genre, objectives and requirements of the task and should analyse the task in your assignment using MDUP or another method of task analysis. For more specific information on what MDUP is and how it can be helpful in understanding an assignment, please see below.

After you have searched for and found information to support your assignment, you should evaluate the information. Please see the ‘evaluating information’ page on this topic. After evaluating the information, you can then begin to think about how the information you’ve located and evaluated for the assignment can be used to support your position in your writing.

You can start this process by using a mind map, argument map, or other note-taking and planning method to match the question you are trying to answer in your assignment with the position you are writing and the information you have found.

MDUP

Before you research for or write an assignment, you should analyse the task / question / instructions. Task analysis helps us to find out exactly what the question is asking for, and ensures that we have correct focus in our answer. One strategy for question analysis is called MDUP:

- **Main ideas in the question or task** - all the ‘content’ words and phrases in the task, as well the general and specific discipline of the subject. These main ideas become search terms in your research.
Directive verbs - the words that tell you to do something. For example “analyse” or “evaluate”. These words tell you how to respond to the task.

Underlying question. Often—but not always—we need to answer an unstated question before we can respond appropriately to the task. To find it, think deeply about controversies in the discipline and relate them to the wider, real-world context.

Predictive thesis. This is your initial answer to the essay task, based on what you already know. Your predictive thesis gives you a place to start your thinking and helps direct your first research efforts. Often, our predictive thesis is very different to our final argument, as our research influences our ideas and our argument evolves.

An example essay task…

“Using case illustrations, explain how legally binding contracts are distinguished from mere agreements which have no legal consequences.”

Main Ideas: commercial law, legally binding contracts, mere agreements, legal consequences, case illustrations

Directive Words: explain... how = describe the process; using = apply cases to description; distinguish(ed) = show the difference between

Underlying question: What's the difference between contracts and agreements? What are the implications of this for businesses?

Predictive thesis: Contracts are written, agreements are spoken. To protect themselves, businesses should use contracts.