Planning and Structuring Assignments

Here is a quick summary of the session and a reminder of the top tips for ensuring you meet your deadlines and pass your course assignments.

1. Analyse the task
2. Make an initial plan
3. Research information
4. Read and make notes
5. Think critically and organise materials
6. Write a draft
7. Redraft, edit and proofread

Plan your time

Know your submission date

Sometimes deadlines fall at a similar time, so it is a good idea to plan ahead to meet them all. Use a wall planner or online assignment deadline planner to help you identify how many weeks you have and what steps you need to take to get there.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 1-2</td>
<td>Start researching information, reading and making notes, plan structure.</td>
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<td>Weeks 3-5</td>
<td>Critically think; decide what to use and what to dismiss.</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Write up your first draft &amp; proofread.</td>
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<td>Weeks 7-8</td>
<td>Produce second draft - check structure &amp; content &amp; edit.</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Format and submit your work.</td>
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Managing your workload

- Get an overview of the tasks you need to do and make a term plan.
- Use a planner and academic diary or online app
- Work backwards from your deadline and start planning what you have to do by when.
- Include seminars and presentations
Initial planning

'Brainstorm' what you think should go into the assignment. Use lists, post-its, mind maps and think about:

- What you already know.
- What you have read.
- What you have covered in lectures and seminars.
- What you need to research in line with the brief and marking criteria.

Try different planning tools and approaches to find out what works best for you. Some common planning models include:

- Linear plan
- Spatial plan
- Concept pyramid
- SWOT Analysis
- PEST Analysis

Aim to get feedback from a tutor before you start writing - the planning stage is a good time to test the validity and logic of your ideas before you commit them to paper.

Plan your approach

Read your assignment brief and marking criteria carefully. Make sure you are clear about what you are being asked to do. Are you being asked to describe, discuss or critically evaluate?

For a full list of definitions of common instruction words, check out this online resource from the University of Leicester.

The Glastonbury festival exemplifies everything that a perfect event would contain in the 21st Century. Discuss.

More resources

- Structuring your Essay, Solent Online Learning: Step-by-step guide to different essay structures and planning approaches.
- Breaking Down an Exam Question, University of Bedfordshire
- Academic writing guides, University of Leicester