

Academic Expectations [Fact sheet]

One of the most important tasks in your first year of a degree is to work out what is expected of you as a student and then work out how to meet, or even exceed, these expectations, but this can be a complex process. Throughout your course of study you may need to complete a range of tasks, including:

- independent study
- team projects
- exams
- written assignments
- work placements
- presentations

These assignments can have very specific requirements and to achieve our best it is vital that we pay close attention the assignment brief and assessment criteria. The **brief** is a set of instructions for you to follow, and the **assessment criteria** is a set of expectations that your lecturers will use when they grade your essay. You should be able to find these in module handbooks on my Unihub.

Academic Expectations

First of all, in order to succeed and meet assessment criteria you will need to demonstrate that you have knowledge of your chosen discipline and demonstrate three key skills. These are:

- **Academic research** in a particular field to develop specialist knowledge and understanding.
- **Strong communication** in speech and writing for different types of assignment so that you can express your ideas clearly and in the appropriate format.
- **Critical thinking** in response to a particular question so that you can learn to analyse and accept or reject existing ideas based on sound reasoning, and also develop new ideas.

Some students often neglect one area of this:

- They may for example have a good clear response to the question but no research evidence to persuade the reader that they are right; or they may even have evidence but not credible evidence.
- They could give plenty of evidence and wide research but not use this evidence to support an answer to the question; simply repeating information with no real purpose is not enough.
- A further possibility is that they have strong evidence and a good response to the question but that it is difficult to see this because the writing is not very clear or well organised.

The best assignments are those which concentrate equally on all three areas

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Key concepts in Academic Study: Assessment Criteria

Your handbooks will outline detailed **assessment criteria** which are involved in these three skills and which contribute to delivering a strong assignment. There are broad similarities in the criteria of all courses and your lecturers have expectations that you should achieve the following.

In your assignments you need to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Answer the Questionb. Show a clear understanding of the subject matterc. Show an awareness of key ideasd. Present your ideas in a logical waye. Create a coherent and well-supported argumentf. Make effective use of sources (other people's ideas)g. Follow academic writing conventions, including appropriate referencingh. Use clear and accurate languagei. Show evidence of critical thinkingj. Produce the work independently and clearly highlight any areas of knowledge or theory that are taken from other people.

- Why do you think these criteria are important in academic study? Read the fact sheet entitled 'Academic Criteria Explained' to check your understanding.

If you do not understand expectations, don't hesitate to ask. They might seem clear at first sight but what your lecturers think is **logical, appropriate** or **coherent**, might not be quite what you have in mind.

Meeting Expectations: Checklists

One device that will help you to assess your own work and whether or not you have met expectations before the deadline is to use a checklist. See the sample checklist provided here. Asking yourself a comprehensive set of questions which cover all aspects of the assessment criteria helps you to focus on what you have done well and what needs improving. With a checklist you can avoid neglecting key areas as you will be forced to think about them.

When you receive feedback from your tutors you may also be more aware of your own personal strengths and weaknesses in academic study. At each stage of your studies you might therefore like to add further questions so that you can personalise the checklist to your own needs.

In this way you can develop new skills and focus on developing your own personal style within the conventions of your chosen field of study.

What support is available?

As with all aspects of your studies at the university, we recognise that understanding criteria and expectations can be quite challenging. If you have any questions regarding this you can seek further help at the Learn@UoA & from tutors in Academic Writing and Language (AWL) or Maths, Statistics and Numeracy (MSN) and from Student Learning Advisors.

You may also find further materials here on the website useful. We have provided fact sheets and activities for you to work on various different areas of academic study.